

approach. Only that she is a woman, and writes, richly, as a woman. It is not particularly learned; it is anything but systematic. But it is understanding, and gentle; and there are those homely flashes, the soul-proud woman like the house-proud woman, the wrong way to heaven like the way to Berlin in a pre-war train plastered with 'Verboten' notices. The value of her book is not so much in any doctrinal teaching as in the attitude it conveys. Caryll Houselander is utterly at home in her Father's House—and what does any mother teach us but to grow up at ease in the household and traditions of our fathers?

We are here to comfort Christ, to fill up, in St Paul's phrase, what is wanting of his sufferings; and to find our joy and integration with all men in that universal comforting. Miss Houselander is at her best when she writes of suffering; the war has evidently forced her to revise whatever romantic illusions she may have had about it; one passage alone is enough to earn our gratitude: 'It is never easy to meditate on the Passion; the more we know of real sorrow and real pain . . . the more difficult it becomes to think about the pain and sorrow of Christ. . . . We can no longer bear to have beautiful thoughts about the suffering Christ. The mind becomes bleak, we begin to suffer with him'.

The book is made up of bits and pieces, a book for meditation. First Miss Houselander sets us at home with Christ in the realness of his mystical body; then she describes three defences (perhaps a not too happy word) of the mind against the unhappiness of the world today—prayer, appreciation of suffering, surrender of our fears. The section on prayer is a little disappointing—we are told too little; but on suffering and on fear we do not need to be told anything but only to have sympathy, which is where Miss Houselander excels. A short section follows on our Lady's mind, her constant care for her children. Then we return to suffering, now in the context of reparation when I 'feel the weariness of the man beside me aching in my bones'; and finally a word on the Risen Christ which solves suffering in joy that will not wait for the end of suffering but already breaks in on it and suffuses it with ineffable radiance. COLUMBA RYAN, O.P.

THE PRIEST AMONG THE SOLDIERS. Edited by Martin Dempsey. (Burns Oates; 10s. 6d.)

An introduction by Mgr John Coghlan and eighteen chapters in the form of graphic sketches of personal experience show us the priest on active service in a world at war. At the front, in the base, as a prisoner, on a hospital ship, whatever the circumstances, however strange the conditions (so much had to be improvised), the chaplain was first of all a *priest*: Mass and Sacraments mattered most. War conditions modified ways and means, but not essentials. And here and there remarks which every priest working in England might well ponder: e.g. 'Many of the younger men, products of post-1918 paganism, knew nothing of religion, and many of them considered it a nuisance' (p. 120); or 'How much work was waiting

to be done; how many men needed not just an occasional visit from the chaplain but a complete and thorough course of instruction in their religion' (p. 144). The appendices consist of lists of chaplains who were killed, prisoners and wounded. These complete an admirable little book.

ROLAND POTTER, O.P.

ST THOMAS D'AQUIN. By A.-Z. Serrand, O.P. (Editions du Cerf; Blackfriars Publications; 1s. 3d.)

There is a sensitive perception, a delicate ironical malice that is wholly French, and a zest for truth about this sketch of St Thomas's character that make it altogether delightful and far more revealing than many a longer work. Nor is it only economy of nature and grace which that personality, perfectly integrated with his teaching, exemplified. The author skilfully balances the graciousness and self-assurance of the saint's human nature with the aptness of the divine grace he received to perfect it.

Père Serrand is an iconoclast among hagiographers, but one as discriminating as the skilled restorer of ikons who, sure of his touch, is not afraid to strip off romantic overpaintings. What he uncovers is the authentic masterpiece of God's working in a spirit as human as our own, however much more gifted and privileged. C. R.

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## EXTRACTS

DOES THE REFORM of the Latin text of the Psalter foreshadow a reform of the Breviary itself? asks Dom Capelle in *Les Questions Liturgiques et Paroissiales* (Mont César, Louvain). Cardinal Nasalli Rocca di Cornegliano, Archbishop of Bologna, has published a paper, *De Breviario Romano et Kalendario eiusdem Brevariū reformando*, which suggests that the question will soon become a practical one.

Dom Capelle summarises the Cardinal's three principles of reform:

(a) *Length*. The duties of the pastoral ministry have become so heavy that a modification of the daily *Onus* is now a necessity. This matter must be frankly faced.

(b) *Truth*. The rules of a balanced historical criticism must be applied to the official prayer of the Church. How many erroneous statements continue to be made in our breviary, to the detriment of its dignity and to the respect owing to its reader! This parasitic vegetation must be cut away.

(c) *Moderation*. We must guard against filling up the liturgy with new feasts that are alien to its spirit. The Cardinal has in mind here certain recent feasts concerned with an attribute of Christ or the saints rather than with the concrete mysteries of their lives.

The aim of reform must be to give back to the Office all its nobility of mood and its sublimity of expression. Revision will therefore not improvise its criteria but will find them in the traditional spirit of