

Literary and psychological insight are brought to bear to present this greatest of our Lady's shrines as an illustration and continual proof of the thesis that all our Lady's shrines are embodiments of a message of Jesus, the Word of God made audible, now as always, through Mary.

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SAINT PIUS X. By P. L. Occelli, s.s.p. (Browne & Nolan Ltd, Dublin; St Paul's Publications, London; 10s. 6d.)

This is quite a good example of the newer and healthier trends in more or less popular lives of the saints. Not indeed that there is need for legend or pious story to supply any deficiencies in our factual knowledge of such a recent saint; but this is an honest attempt to give the story of St Pius X in simple, straightforward terms, as it happened. As for pious stories, there are enough remarkable incidents in the life of such a man to make embroidery superfluous. Anyone who wants an informative yet not too elaborate account will find this a useful book. But it could quite easily have been something rather better. It is a pity that Americanisms could not have been smoothed out of this edition: 'program' is distracting to the English eye, while to read of Don Orione on the way to the Vatican 'stopping off' to go to confession puts one out of humour for whatever is to follow. More important, the note of edification—in the unfortunate sense—will creep in; and it becomes stronger as the story goes on and the life and achievements of Pius X become more and more amazing—and less and less in need of a pointing finger and an exclaimed 'how wonderful!'. This also gives the style a heaviness, as distinct from due seriousness, which is not relieved by an occasional 'noise' or excitability (this in one place obscures a very proper attempt to show how Modernism was faulty in itself, which is a pity). However, it takes more than such faults to obscure Pius X, who shines through this book as he does through the various and interesting contemporary photographs with which it is illustrated.

RACHEL ATTWATER

THE MAID OF ORLEANS. By Sven Stolpe. Trs. by Eric Lewenhaupt. (Burns & Oates; 25s.)

We tend to take St Joan of Arc very much for granted. The general lines of her story are familiar to us from childhood and it is easy to go no further than a vague picture, derived probably from early story-books, of an idealized young girl in armour carrying a banner. If we do get further it is perhaps only to wonder mildly at the mysterious ways of God, who raised up one of his saints to take a decisive part in a rather brutal and sordid medieval conflict—or in these days of 'total'

war, to take heart at the spectacle of a soldier who was not only a saint but a woman.

Mr Stolpe's most interesting book provides a remedy, or an enlargement, for both these attitudes of mind. In the first place, influenced by recent studies of the subject, he sets out to show us Joan as nearly as possible as she was. He has a great devotion to and admiration of her, and he is proportionately impatient of the romanticism and sentimentality with which she has been surrounded. She was of course in her own brief career the centre of legend and pious miracle-mongering of the sort with which we are only too familiar in connection with the saints, and, in case we should think that this sort of thing does not really matter, he suggests that this had a great effect on the popular feeling amongst her enemies that she was a witch, and so contributed to her condemnation. This is a horrid lesson for us, but in fact it seems that political considerations alone would have 'demanded'—as political considerations so often seem to do—her death. He is most careful about his facts: for instance, to what extent and in what way did Joan actually lead the armies of France? And he quotes largely from contemporary sources, most effectively of all from the records of her trial which provide a living and moving picture of this young girl as no later narrative can.

Mr Stolpe deals impressively with the interpretation of Joan's sanctity. If anyone was, surely Joan of Arc was the active not the contemplative servant of God; but Mr Stolpe cuts healthily across our over-simplified categories, laying emphasis on the essential life of the spirit which underlay all her startling actions; calling her quite simply a mystic. He sees the first part of her life, including her military achievements, as only the preliminary part of her service of God, the climax being in the sufferings of her imprisonment and death: 'God has spoken twice: in Holy Writ and in history. But his language is always the same: love which sacrifices itself for those who have no love. . . . Joan's real greatness is her willingness to die as shameful a death as the Saviour upon the cross.'

The translator has done his part well in the presentation of this usually, but not quite always, harmonious combination of history and interpretation; very seldom indeed is there a moment's doubt as to whether the author really intended certain phrases. The book is provided with an index and a postscript which is in fact a short bibliography, and some taking reproductions of contemporary pictures: Joan before the Dauphin at Chinon is not at all like our story-book notions.

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