

obedience to divine command. Professor Clark has remedied this, and the two books chosen for translation show very clearly Suso the MINNESINGER and the theologian. One is introduced to the saint from a new angle. To quote from the preface (p. 12): 'From his works we can build up a complete picture of the man. We see his humility, his modesty, his deep insight into the springs of human conduct, not only in its frailty, but also in its strength, his tenderness and sympathy for all who suffer, his charity, his sincerity and his spirituality.' And again (p. 18): 'But *The Little Book of Truth* is not the product of an immature mind. As regards chronology it may be early, but it is not youthful. The writer has been trained in theology and philosophy, and he has made some progress on the mystic way. He is writing of things that he knows, not merely theoretically, but also through actual experience.'

One of the most delightful characteristics of this book is the care and scholarship which has been lavished; from beginning to end one is conscious that no pains have been spared in perfecting it. A passage like this from the introduction (page 23) is a joy to read: 'To speculate is to look in a mirror. To look at the universe is to speculate on the nature of God, and to see the Creator in his works. Suso paints in glowing colours the beauty of the heavens, with the starry host, the glory of the summer, the grass and foliage and flowers, the song of the birds, and so forth. If God is so lovable in his creatures, how much more lovable must he be in himself.' One appreciates the care which has been taken in the translation and annotation, even to transliterating and pointing out the rhyming passages which occur in *The Little Book of Eternal Wisdom*. To sum up: Professor Clark has given us a book which is not only a literary treat, but should be of real help in the spiritual life. S.M.C.

MARGARET OF METOLA. By William R. Bonniwell, O.P., with drawings by Sr Mary of the Compassion, O.P. (P. J. Kenedy and Sons, New York; \$2.50.)

Here is a happy example of Dominican family co-operation: the life of a Secular Tertiary written by an historian of the Order and illustrated by a Nun of the Perpetual Rosary who is one of America's leading Catholic artists. In the course of his researches Fr Bonniwell chanced upon the original MS. of the life of Margaret of Metola, b. 1287, the Margaret of Castello of the Dominican Breviary. Finding that it differed substantially from the traditional version, he produced a critical study upon which this popular account is based.

It was known that Margaret was born blind; now it emerges that she was also hunchbacked, crippled and generally deformed. Her callous parents, noble only in name, unwilling to acknowledge such an offspring, kept her out of sight, hiding her in an anchoress's cell when she was six, then in a cellar of their palace where she was deprived even of the

Sacraments, and finally abandoning her when a hoped-for miracle did not take place. Margaret, now seventeen, for a time shared the garbage and the gutters with the beggars of Castello. Then the poor, recognising her holiness, took it in turns to support her. A community of Nuns received her, only to eject and calumniate her when her fervent observance of the Rule put their relaxations to shame. She remained patient and serene through it all, weeping only at the goodness of God in allowing her to be so conformed to the sufferings of his Son. Finally she became a 'Mantellate', i.e. a Secular Tertiary living in the home of one of the Sisters where she died at thirty-three. During this last phase, miracles, prophecies, ecstasies, and other preternatural gifts drew attention to her obvious nearness to God; yet we are told—consoling fact!—that virtue never 'came natural' to her but was an uphill struggle right to the end. When she died the clamour of the mob, reinforced by the cure of a mute cripple at her bier, secured for her the burial of a saint within the walls of the Dominican church.

A spate of miracles followed, and about forty years later a Canon of the Cathedral of Castello set out to refute the 'fantastic legends' about her which were current in the city. Instead he found that they were true and well authenticated, and in reparation for his incredulity he wrote her life. Subsequent biographers, by withholding the more unpleasant facts (perhaps from discretion in the first place), diminished both the pathos and the heroism of Margaret's story. Fr Bonniwell, by re-telling it in all its stark tragedy, helps us to understand the fascination which the saintly little dwarf exercised both in life and after death, especially since both he and the artist have caught something of that child-like simplicity and freshness which so often characterises the blind.

Despite the popular cultus, political disturbances delayed Margaret's beatification until 1609. Her body was found incorrupt and so it remains to this day. The townspeople still turn to her for help and comfort and among her most fervent clients are the children of the city's blind asylum founded in her honour. But there are so many things in her life to appeal to modern sympathies that it may well prove that, by popularising it, Fr Bonniwell has given the impetus to a movement for her Canonisation.

S. M. ALBERT, O.P.

SAINT BENEDICT JOSEPH LABRE. By Agnes de la Gorce. Translated by Rosemary Sheed. (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.)

Anyone who has ever thought there is a 'sameness' in the 'Lives of the Saints' should read the life of St Benedict Joseph Labre by Agnes de la Gorce; entrancingly written, and beautifully translated by Rosemary Sheed, who has succeeded, not only in telling the story of an unusual life, but in conveying the atmosphere so well brought out in the original French.