

A RETREAT UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS  
IN UNION WITH ST. TERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS AND SISTER  
ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY. By Mother Mary of the  
Blessed Sacrament, Carmelite Nun. (Burns Oates & Wash-  
bourne, Ltd. ; 7/6.)

Those who have enjoyed *A Retreat under the guidance of St. Teresa* will not be disappointed in the companion volume. The compiler tells us that she has attempted, by extracts from the writings of St. John of the Cross, to give 'a faithful epitome of his spirituality, and one that would be accessible to all souls aiming at divine union.' Everyone, therefore, who happens to be aiming at the end for which he was created, may find profit in this book. That St. John of the Cross wrote particularly for his own Order is evident from the title of his longest work, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*; but it is equally evident, from allusions in this same book to the dangers of attachment to wealth, family and rank, that he was writing also for lay-folk. And since his spiritual doctrine has won him the title of Doctor of the Church, it is no longer permissible to regard that doctrine as merely esoteric.

Spiritual directors are usually chary of allowing their younger penitents to read the works of St. John of the Cross, but there is little fear that he (or even she) who follows this *Retreat* will be tempted to mistake sensible fervour for the mystical marriage or a fit of indigestion for the night of the spirit. The compiler wisely starts her retreatants in the valley, where few can fail to recognise some of their own features in St. John's description of the imperfections of beginners. Thence they are led gradually up to the vantage point provided by the Saint's writings, whence they may see, if only dimly, the goal at which they should aim. It cannot but profit a traveller to know exactly where he is going, the best way of getting there, and the geography of the country he must traverse; and a guide-book is useful for reference at all stages of a journey.

It was a happy thought to conclude each meditation by extracts from the writings of St. Teresa of Lisieux and Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, who show the teaching of St. John of the Cross in practice.

David Lewis's translation of St. John's works has been used except for two meditations from a book not translated by Lewis. It is a pity the translator of these had not a better knowledge of English.

M.B.