

feet of Jesus—that they may give themselves more abundantly to their fellow creatures. In the vastnesses of the desert surrounded by the problems and perils of the Mohammedan world, no less than amid those of the modern materialism of Europe, it may be truly said that he who has called his Little Sisters will be ever present with them. Jesus of Nazareth leads the way.

A DOMINICAN RETREAT HOUSE IN SWITZERLAND

BY

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SWITZERLAND, these days, is to most of us the promised land of material enjoyments, the land flowing with milk and honey, where the Englishman, tired of the never-ending austerity diet, can for a few holiday weeks eat butter and cheese and cake and cream to his heart's content. But if he should not be only materially-minded he can also find spiritual enjoyments which perhaps he did not expect.

On the beautiful Lac de Neuchâtel of the fascinating, ever-changing play of colours, there stands the lovely old town Estavayer-le-Lac. It is a medieval place, with a thick wall and a castle, uneven, narrow streets, with a fine old parish church in the baroque style so frequent in Switzerland, and a convent of Dominican contemplative nuns which can boast of six hundred years of unbroken existence. Six hundred years of Mass, of liturgical chant—and these nuns chant beautifully—of contemplation—this means an atmosphere impregnated with the prayer and with the peace of the life of Mary.

Quite near this Convent a Dominican Retreat House was opened in 1943, in the middle of the war, and flourished at once. It is beautifully situated, many of its large, airy rooms overlook the Lake. It is run by a very charming and experienced Dominican Tertiary who receives guests for private as well as for preached Retreats; the ideal is, perhaps, to combine the two—to have a few days in private before by way of preparation, or afterwards to ruminate on what has been heard.

The Retreats are normally preached by Dominican Fathers, and

the Directrice is usually fortunate enough to secure some of the best-known Fathers of the French Province. There are ordinarily only two addresses a day—an excellent arrangement, as it is not only less of a strain for the priest, but also gives sufficient time to the retreatants for their prayer—an activity so often sadly curtailed in Retreats with four or even five Conferences a day. At Estavayer there is ample time for prayer and reading, whether in the lovely little chapel in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved during Retreats, in one's room, in the 'salon' which contains a very good theological and mystical library, or in the garden which, however is small—though it makes up for its lack of size by the beautiful view over the lake.

A special feature of the preached Retreats is the '*Cercle*' in the afternoon, a kind of study circle, when the preacher answers written questions of general interest which have been deposited by retreatants in a box during the morning. At night one goes to Compline at the Convent.

Apart from Retreats that may be attended by anyone, there are those of groups, such as Catholic Action, nurses, young couples, who bring with them their own chaplain who arranges his Retreat on his own lines, though within the framework of the rules of the house. Last autumn there was made a new venture, viz. a short Retreat for non-Catholics with a view to giving them an adequate idea of the Catholic religion in Catholic surroundings.

Though this House is quite a new venture, everything runs smoothly and without fuss, and it has already developed a character of its own. There is a typically Dominican atmosphere of freedom and ease about it, which goes with a discipline that is in no way irksome. To give an example: though strict silence reigns throughout the day, there is a 'recreation' after lunch, when talking is allowed for those who wish to take advantage of it. The Conferences are, of course, in French, but for anyone accustomed to reading French spiritual books it will not be difficult to follow them. It is the ambition of the foundress, already partly realised, to make her house a centre of international spiritual contacts, and perhaps many English Catholics—and Christians of other denominations, too—might find it desirable to exchange for a few days the international atmosphere of the big Swiss hotels for the supra-national and supernatural charity that permeates this humble Retreathouse.¹

¹ The Directrice of the Maison de Retraites, Estavayer-le-Lac (Fribourg), Switzerland, will be happy to answer any enquiries; it is advisable to make arrangements as early as possible, because the holiday months July to September are getting booked up very quickly.