

COLLINGRIDGE: A FRANCISCAN CONTRIBUTION TO CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION. By J. B. Dockery. (Johns, Newport; 25s.)

In the standard histories of the years before Catholic Emancipation, for example those of Ward and Amherst, Bishop Collingridge does not find a front-rank place. The lion's share of the epic story has hitherto been stolen by Milner, the stormy petrel of the period. Even Douglas and Poynter, the statesmen of the Emancipation transaction, still await biographers. Fr Dockery's life of Collingridge, against that background, clearly demonstrates two things: that there is need for a book on *each* of the Vicars Apostolic and their coadjutors, and that no definitive history of 1829 can be written till all these gaps have been filled.

*Collingridge* is a tribute to a great and holy man, whose devoted work behind the scenes of English public life, albeit he was neither negotiator nor politician, does warrant the book's sub-title. For Peter Bernardine Collingridge was the mainstay of the Western District (i.e. all of West and South-West England, and the whole of Wales) from 1806, when he became coadjutor to Bishop Sharrock, till Baines succeeded him upon his death in the very year of Emancipation itself. And though Baines's extraordinary report to Rome on taking over would have relegated his predecessor to the status of an ineffective recluse, Catholicism in the West after the Gordon Riots owes more to Collingridge, as Father Dockery reveals, than to any other single person.

The method of the book has been, wisely, to let its hero speak for himself as much as is compatible with the writing of biography. Many biographers seem torn between a chronological and a topical arrangement of their chapters. Fr Dockery has ignored the apparent antithesis between the two techniques, by telling his story chronologically for the most part but holding up its climax in order to give us separate chapters on Collingridge's general administration of his District; on his relations (as Bishop) with the Franciscans who had formed him; on his relations with the other religious Orders, and particularly the houses of nuns teaching in his area; on his Pastorals, and on his private letters. This treatment allows the Bishop to emerge for the reader as a personality.

The incidental by-products are numerous and fascinating. We get a concise history of St Bonaventure's at Douay; a plan of the Embassy Chapels in London; a detailed description of the Church in Wales at the time, not readily available elsewhere; a realization that Collingridge was *not* anti-Jesuit; a reminder of how nearly Lingard came to being made a bishop; and we are left speculating whether the rift among the Vicars Apostolic might have been healed earlier if

