

good bibliography and useful notes. The second consists of excerpts from Ivo of Chartres, Gratian, John of Salisbury, Anselm of Laon, Abailard, Lombard and the Victorines, usually exasperatingly brief and often, it would seem, chosen at random. No one who cares for the *Policraticus* or the *Benjamin Minor* could read this section without poignant regrets for lost opportunities. The last section seems almost a rather unfair caricature of the whole series with St Bonaventure, Duns Scotus and William Ockham crowded together in about fifty pages and Ockham's thought only represented from his *Quaestiones de Potestate Papae*.

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CONFESSIONS. Unpublished Sonnets of Racine translated into English verse by Walter Roberts. (Mowbray; 13s. 6d.)

These sonnets, 108 in number, have been ascribed to Jean Racine and are said to have been written in his last years in exile from the court of Louis XIV. In his Introduction, Mr Martin Jarret-Kerr says of the translation that it is 'felicitous, and retains something of the sincerity and deep feeling of the originals . . .'. But these are purely literary considerations and are best left to the connoisseurs of French literature.

The sonnets are described as 'a religious poem', the work of a sick man conscious that his end is near and humbly preparing himself to meet his God. The drama of the final conversion of a deeply religious man who is, besides, a literary genius of the highest order is an experience in which readers of *THE LIFE* would want to share. The sonnets, however, according to Mr Roberts 'show him (Racine) in an acute condition of anguish worthy of the utmost flight of his tragic imagination'. But anguish for what? Taken at its face value this poem is the outpourings of a man sick in mind and body, tortured by religious doubts and scruples, bitter beyond words at being dismissed his post through the betrayal of his friends and family. He abases himself under the avenging hand of God, spares himself no opprobrium, waits in patience for the healing favour of justification. Thinking on the injustice of his position and foreseeing that his treacherous friends might reap the advantage of his downfall, he calls on heaven to smite them and destroy them utterly. And finally, hoping perhaps that all is not irrevocably lost, he fawns and flatters the King, whose judgment is right in spite of the lies and deceits of those around him.

The religious genuineness of Racine's death and the final outcome of his salvation are not—needless to say—matters to be judged one way or the other from these sonnets.

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