

REVIEWS

PSALMS AND CANTICLES OF THE BREVIARY. By Richard J. Foster, S.T.L., L.S.S. (The Mercier Press; 15s.)

There can be nothing but praise for this book. But why wasn't it done fifty years ago? When a young man had the temerity to tell Tennyson that anybody could have written *Enoch Arden* if only he had thought of it the poet is said to have replied: 'Yes; but it was I who happened to think of it!' Father Foster, who is the Professor of Sacred Scripture at Oscott College, has happily thought of a good thing; but only an expert could have done it so thoroughly well.

The book covers the Psalms and Canticles of the Divine Office from Sunday Matins to Saturday Compline. What the author has done is to introduce each psalm in its proper setting, outlining the circumstances that gave rise to it, so that it has a background of reality that helps the reader to understand why it was written and what it means. A simple explanation follows, with an application of its teaching to everyday life. A further point in the book's favour is that the new version of the Psalter has been used throughout.

Father Vincent McNabb once admitted to the present reviewer that he recited 'whole tracts of the psalms with an act of faith in their meaning', which may suggest that Father Foster's work will not be without value to many a 'Master in Israel'. To the young subdeacon, as well as to the religious novice who says the Divine Office, the book must come as a boon beyond all price. Elderly priests may be inclined to regret that a copy of it was not available as a companion to their first Breviary.

Every Novice Master—and Novice Mistress—should order a dozen copies at once. With the *Psalms* and *Canticles* rubbing shoulders with Father Martindale's delightfully inspiring *Sweet Singer of Israel*, and the new English translation of the Psalter by Mgr. R. Knox, our young men and women can now embark upon the Divine Office with interest and enthusiasm. Fortunately for them, Father Foster has made the recitation of it a happy adventure. *O si sic antea!*
EDWIN ESSEX, O.P.

BY JACOB'S WELL: A planned retreat by Archbishop James Leen, C.S.Sp. (Burns Oates; 12s. 6d.)

Mgr Leen is an Irishman who is bishop of Port Louis, Mauritius, and the retreat of which *By Jacob's Well* is the record was delivered in French. It has now been translated into English—one had almost said Irish—by Father Edward Leen. These circumstances explain an angularity of language which mars what is otherwise a notable book. 'God awaits your decision: He would know what is your election.' 'They are exposed to indulge in a sense of false security.' 'The sacrament condescends in a marvellous way.' We mention such

infelicities—and they are numerous—only to urge the prospective reader to go beyond them. For the Archbishop's retreat is a magnificent survey of Catholic doctrine, solid, objective, truly theological. On this sturdy foundation he develops a spirituality which should be of the greatest assistance for the members of religious orders with whom he is primarily concerned. *By Jacob's Well* will be particularly useful for those who have to make a private retreat. It is comparable to the classic work of Bishop Hedley, and should take its place with it in the libraries of all religious houses.

The typography and general format of the publications of Messrs. Burns Oates and Washbourne are now so invariably excellent that one takes them for granted. Nevertheless one is glad to acknowledge this important factor in the presentation of the printed word. Even the most lofty spirituality can be assisted—or hindered—in its effect by the material circumstances of paper, print and design.

I. E.

MONSIEUR PORTAL—PRETRE DE LA MISSION 1885-1926. By H. Hemmer. (Bloud and Gay; n.p.)

The Abbé Portal, with Lord Halifax, was the inspirer and original driving force of the movement which led to the re-examination of Anglican Orders and later to the Malines Conversations. Throughout its course that movement was dominated by the excessive optimism of both men, an optimism which originated in a failure to grasp the real and complex nature of 20th century Anglicanism. Far too great an emphasis was laid on the possibility and the practicability of corporate reunion between the Church of England as such and the Catholic Church, and this led to the breakdown of the movement, after the last of the Malines Conversations, in the form in which they had sponsored it.

Their pioneer work however has not been lost and an eirenic spirit which they generated still persists and grows, though its activity is likely to take a more realistic form in the future. This life of M. Portal will be of value to all who are interested in the development of reunion work on eirenic lines, the more so because it has been edited by, though owing to his death it did not receive its final form from, M. le Chanoine Hippolyte Hemmer, himself one of the participants in the later stages of the Malines Conversations and a devoted friend of M. Portal.

The biography tells of a life of many-sided activity and great devotion but it is instructive in revealing how little knowledge M. Portal had of the Church of England. He treated it always as if it were to be compared with one of the autocephalous Eastern Churches with an unbroken 'Catholic' tradition, so that he felt justified in claiming that individual conversion ought to be consistently discouraged. He told a meeting of Anglo-Catholics in London (p. 80) that as far as sacramental doctrine was concerned there were no