

FRANCIS THOMPSON AND OTHER ESSAYS. By Fr. Vincent McNabb, O.P.
With an Introduction by G. K. Chesterton. (London: Blackfriars
Publications; 4s. 6d.)

These sixteen essays were first published twenty years ago as an offering to Fr Vincent at the time of his golden jubilee as a Dominican. Mr Hilary Pepler was a kind of arch-conspirator who edited the book with the attractive Ditchling Press imprint, inviting G. K. Chesterton to write his Introduction; and the whole thing was sprung upon Fr Vincent as a lovely surprise. It contains characteristic samples of his varied genius and perpetuates many of the pointed truths he would wish us never to forget, such as the seven principles (promulgated by the archbishops and bishops of England and Wales in 1929) underlying the Catholic attitude on education, principles which have become even more important with the passage of time and have a not merely local, but a world-wide relevance and might well be invoked at the present moment in such distant places as Argentina and the Union of South Africa. A writer reviewing the book in 1935 said Fr McNabb was apparently some sort of socialist who would yet walk Park Lane barefoot to save the soul of a dying plutocrat. If it contained nothing else, the book would be worth having for the two superb pieces, *The Call of St Patrick* (both English and Irish should take it to heart) and the Sermon preached at the funeral of Father Bede Jarrett. Some books soon go out of date, but here is one that, like good wine, improves with the years.

BERNARD DELANY

A VINCENT McNABB ANTHOLOGY. Edited by Francis Edward Nugent.
(Blackfriars Publications; 13s. 6d.)

'It seems to be generally agreed amongst those best qualified to judge', writes Fr Ferdinand Valentine in his *Father Vincent McNabb: A Portrait*, 'that Fr Vincent made little or no contribution to contemporary thought and theology.' When the reader has swallowed that and recovered his breath, he is told on the same page on the authority of one E. H. Haywood that 'He was not a good writer mainly because his mind moved with such dazzling speed that the medium was too slow for him'. There was something in him that was better than anything he ever wrote or said and he wrote rapidly not aiming at fine writing; but to say that he was not a good writer is sheer nonsense. And any one who disputes the fact should be recommended to take a look at this Anthology which contains fair specimens of his prose during all the years of his writing life. Even the Conferences which were for the most part spoken extempore and taken down by a reporter are good writing, even as writing; though obviously they can