

SAINT CATHERINE IN TUSCAN PAINTING. By George Kaftal. (Blackfriars Publications; 10s.6d.)

To review this book is a gracious task. It is difficult to overpraise this style of hagiography so happily inaugurated in *Saint Dominic in Early Tuscan Painting*. The saints often suffer at the hands of their admirers, as Saint Catherine has certainly suffered from some of her hagiographers. Her life, her work, her miracles, her ecstasies are tempting to psychiatry and psychoanalysis; and because the study of introversion belongs to twentieth century self-consciousness the medieval saint is misinterpreted. It is true that certain aspects of her life seem to lend themselves to such interpretation, and so it is easy to forget that she is a woman of her own age, her own city and her own social class. No study of her life which neglects these factors can be a true one. The only way in which it is possible to obtain authentic interpretation of any life is by examination of contemporary documents. In the Middle Ages pictures were widely used for instruction and so contemporary paintings should form one important basis for reconstruction in that period. Doctor Kaftal has shown us what Tuscans living and working within two hundred years of her death knew and thought about a Tuscan saint. Every picture repays the most careful study; one may find there realism, idealism and allegory. A brief notice in the preface puts the reader in possession of the salient facts of the life; the pictures might almost tell the rest. But, in order that nothing may be wanting, the letterpress before each different 'scene' is taken from Father Fen's English version of her life, written by her confessor Blessed Raymond of Capua. (Is it too much to hope that Blackfriars Publications will bring out a reprint of the delightful book?) All lovers of Saint Catherine owe Doctor Kaftal a deep debt of gratitude for giving us our Saint in her reality: virile, deeply versed in the things of God, and passionately devoted; a great woman of her own time and race, and a great saint. The work of the publishers must not be forgotten, since their craftsmanship has made the book a thing of beauty.

*Saint Catherine in Tuscan Painting* is a book to possess, to study and to meditate upon.

S.M.C.

ABBOT MARMION. Edited by the Monks of Glenstal. (Mercier; 12s.6d.)

It has been said that Abbot Columba Marmion possessed the gift of expounding the spiritual life in all its primitive fulness and simplicity. 'It is very simple, it is resumed in one word: Christ' (p. 121). 'For me Jesus is everything' (p. 42). He has reintroduced our generation—and how much it needed this—to all the depths and the riches of the 'mystery of Christ' into which we are caught up by the adoption of sons. He learnt his 'gospel' from St Paul and St John, pondered and relived it in the liturgy, and expounded it according to the tradition of the Fathers and the theological prin-

ciples of St Thomas. And although most of his conferences were delivered to religious who were striving after and at times reaching the heights of sanctity—(though he insisted that holiness is the natural development of the grace of Baptism and therefore the vocation of every Christian)—yet they can be understood and easily applied to his own life by the ordinary devout layman.

Representatives of many religious orders, including such well-known writers as Fr Eugene Boylan and Fr James, have collaborated with the monks of the Irish Benedictine Monastery which owes its existence to Dom Marmion's inspiration, to produce this tribute to the memory of their saintly compatriot. Their diversity and the success with which they prove his affinity to their various schools of spirituality show how truly 'catholic' is his appeal.

Fr Duff's essay on 'Abbot Marmion as Spiritual Guide for the Secular Priest' will surely be an inspiration to others beside those for whom it is intended and it will whet the appetite for the forthcoming 'Christ the Ideal of the Priest', an extract from which fittingly concludes this book.

If this volume should help to hasten the day when Dom Marmion's spirit, scriptural, theological, liturgical, will have been infused into the fervent Irish faith that was also his, it will indeed have wrought a great work for the cause of Irish Catholicism. (cf. the interesting pages on Irish spirituality in the paper 'Abbot Marmion and Fr Leen' by Fr M. Carroll, C.S.Sp.p. 94 et seqq.)

S. M. ALBERT, O.P.

OUR LADY OF FATIMA. By W. T. Walsh. (Macmillan; 10s.6d.)

PORTUGUESE PILGRIMAGE. By C. C. Martindale. (Sheed & Ward; 10s.6d.)

These two books together make an admirable, and not uncritical, guide to Fatima. Mr Walsh gives a straightforward and reliable narrative of the events and their setting. His book is particularly valuable for sketching in its final chapters the subsequent brief lives of Francisco and Jacinta. Not only is the spiritual maturity achieved by these two young children one of the most striking arguments (as Fr Martindale insists) in favour of the claims of Fatima, but it sums up concretely what has been called the 'message' of the place, which is the integration of the natural and the supernatural by penance and prayer. Francisco seems to have plumbed, for all his childhood, the depths of suffering; both preserved that natural balance of life which is one of the things that impress the visitor to the Cova da Iria. So by dint of his narrative Mr Walsh conveys much more persuasively what others, alas, sometimes attempt by typographical yellings and bangings.

Fr Martindale makes a wider skirmish through Portugal and Portuguese history (a too-little-read chapter of the story of Europe). His is less a narrative than a running and ruminating commentary *more suo*, full of learning and gossip, not free from snobbisms and