

MOMENTS OF LIGHT. By Dom Hubert van Zeller, O.S.B. (Burns Oates and Washbourne; 7s.6d.)

FAMINE OF THE SPIRIT. By Dom Hubert van Zeller, O.S.B. (Burns Oates and Washbourne; 7s.6d.)

In these two companion volumes Fr Hubert van Zeller is concerned to encourage and foster perseverance in all who seek God earnestly and sincerely. Not a few, inspired by grace, make the initial surrender of their lives to God. Yet it would appear a number of such souls fail to continue in their undertaking. Why? Among other reasons, it may happen that failure is due to misunderstanding, ignorance, misdirection, timidity as well as, of course, to pride and egotism. Enthusiasm that was engendered by the first stirrings of grace gives place, and in a short while, to aridity. This marked contrast can often puzzle, as well as distress, those desirous of leading an interior life. Indeed it may even result in the devout soul rejecting and forswearing its resolutions. The weaning of man from himself, the rendering of the soul ever more docile and receptive to the unfolding of divine life, this is the necessary phase which must be undergone and endured by all who would make progress in the way of perfection.

In analysing this process of purification the author treats his subject by approaching it from many and different angles, giving to each a distinct paragraph or page. At first sight this approach might savour of a haphazard scheme, making for disunity and division: and so it would were the author not ever mindful of his central theme. By skilfully selecting his angles of approach, Dom Hubert has succeeded not only in dealing adequately with his subject, but has also been enabled to bring in much useful matter that otherwise would perforce have had to be omitted. In all that he writes the author brings discernment, knowledge, and, one would venture to add, experience. Compact and terse as are the chapters, they are never dull or dry. Solid doctrine and teaching there is in plenty, but not so served as to become indigestible. Would that all books on the spiritual life were equally instructive and helpful.

TERENCE NETHERWAY, O.P.

STONE AND THE CATHOLIC REVIVAL. By the Dominican Sisters. (Samuel Walker; 2s.)

By producing this pamphlet of which the interest and importance are out of all proportion to its size, the English Dominican Sisters have earned both our gratitude and congratulations. In fifty-two pages they have told the story of two of the greatest figures of the 'Second Spring' in a way which grips our interest while making it clear that the success of what they *did* flowed from and depended on what they were, i.e., saintly to such a degree that both are candidates for beatification.

The life and work of the Ven. Dominic Barberi, C.P., are now happily familiar to most Catholics, but Mother Margaret Hallahan, who founded the first of those groups of Dominican Tertiaries which have since amalgamated to form the English Congregation of St Catherine of Siena, having its Mother House at Stone where Dominic worked and suffered, is still largely unknown and unappreciated. Yet this large-hearted Irish woman, 'massive in every sense' (p. 51), with 'the vigour of a man, the tenderness of a woman, and the humility of a child', who was born in the slums of St Giles, worked as a servant in England and Belgium, and returned to become a co-worker of Bishop Ullathorne and a pioneer in the restoration of the fulness of Catholic life, is a key figure in the history of nineteenth-century English Catholicism. (It is perhaps claiming rather too much, though, to say that she 'ended by reviving the Dominican Order at that time almost extinct in England'. Her Congregation remained under episcopal jurisdiction and was not subject to the English Dominican Provincial. The immediate impetus to the revival of the First Order came from the taking over of the church at Woodchester from the Passionists in 1850, while the enclosed Nuns entered on a new lease of life when Elizabeth, Countess of Clare, presented them with the Priory of Carisbrooke in 1866.) The vocations of these two stalwarts, at once so different and so similar, were providentially parallel and interwoven, and in the telling of their joint story the unity of God's action and designs has been well brought into relief.

But it might have been even more emphasised and the balance and perspective still better steadied and rectified (cf. Preface) if the origins had been traced back still further and the relations between these new ventures and the 'old remnant' had been developed a little more. Too often the 'Second Spring' is regarded as a complete rebirth, a phoenix-like resurgence from the ashes, whereas was it not rather the grafting of new shoots on the old stock which, though hacked down to a bare minimum, was still alive and vigorous? This aspect of the history of English Catholicism is not yet fully appreciated. When it is, we shall realise how much of its survival and revival is due to those contemplative communities of English men and women who continued in exile the full riches of the life of the Faith that was so much attenuated for their persecuted brethren at home. Some of these maintained unbroken continuity with pre-Reformation communities, others were re-founded in the early days of the Counter-Reformation, some a little later. But all kept intact the older traditions of Western Catholicism to which were now added developments of later generations.

Several of these appear in this story but not always quite in their correct perspective. The English Dominicans may have been very reduced in numbers, but their tradition was a very living thing; and Mother Margaret sent four of her daughters to the community

at Atherstone (founded in Belgium by Cardinal Howard in 1660 as an essential part of his restoration of the English Province) not just to *stay*, as is implied on p. 32, but to learn the observance. Although they were professed religious, Bishop Ullathorne had given orders that they were to be treated exactly as novices, and one of them has left an amusing account of how literally the good nuns obeyed his instructions. The Bishop, who was the Founder and life-long Superior of the new Congregation, brought to it the experience and tradition of the Downside Benedictines, founded in France in 1609; while the Colwich community with whom Mother Margaret was on very friendly terms was descended from that founded at Brussels in 1598. Only when this element is taken into account as well as the 'church of the catacombs' at home, the French emigrés priests, the Oxford converts, the Irish immigrants and the 'Italian Mission', do we get a fully balanced picture of the origins of the Church in England today. S.M.A.

BENEDIKTINISCHES MONCHTUM IN OSTERREICH. (Herder, Vienna, 1949; Sch. 45.)

This book was written by members of the Austrian Benedictine Congregation to commemorate the 1400th anniversary of the death of St Benedict, and, though not ready till last year, reflects great credit on the editor and others responsible. The work is divided into an historical survey, sections dealing with the social value of the Rule and the monastic personnel, and a fourth part on the essence and aims of the Benedictine life. The last is by the editor, Dom Hildebert Tausch, and discusses the future prospects of the Order in Austria.

Benedictinism came to Austria (Salzburg) in 700 A.D. and replaced a Celtic form of monasticism. It took root and by 1100 there were a number of monasteries of which thirteen are still flourishing. Nonnberg, founded 870 A.D., has remained an abbey for nuns without a break until the present day. The twelfth century, when the missionary efforts of the monks had reached their fulfilment, is shown as a time of great activity in building and in the accessory arts. Again, in the Baroque period, but for other reasons, there was a classic epoch of building resulting in such gems as Melk, Mariazell and Michaelbeuern. In 1700 the Benedictine University at Salzburg had as many as fifteen hundred students. Typical of this flamboyant period is the panegyric upon a bishop, which the Benedictine preacher concluded with the words: 'Felix ille, qui sic moritur', allowing the sevenfold echo of the building to add: 'Oritur, oritur, oritur . . .'!

The monasteries suffered much from the State in 1782 when their contemplative ideal was considered 'not useful'. So too under the Nazi domination of recent times they were persecuted, the gymnasium closed, recruitment hindered, and as a result the number of monks was reduced to about two-thirds of the 1880 figure.