

Blackfriars

It is not in the young nun rapt in ecstasy or in the prophet and miracle-worker, the counsellor of saints and theologians, bishops and princes, that we find the full flower of Anne's sanctity, but during the last six years of her long life, in the paralytic, utterly helpless, unable to lie down, tortured in soul and body. 'They take me to Holy Communion every day, but I approach the Holy Table almost like a brute beast,' she says in a dictated letter. The devil, too, tormented her, but to the end it was she who consoled others in their lesser sufferings.

It is refreshing to find a biographer who abstains from lengthy comments and leaves her subject to speak for itself. The only notable faults in the book are a lack of synthesis and of discernment in the choice of material. The unnecessary wealth of names, dates and unimportant details interwoven with foundations, miracles, mystical graces following in thick and fast succession give us the impression of being hurried through an interesting wood that can hardly be seen for the trees. On the other hand, although the author has done well to spare us a long account of the ecclesiastical quarrels waged round the Teresian reform, anything that throws added light on Anne of Jesus and her work surely belongs to the necessary minimum, and we are told nothing of the origin of the two versions of St. Teresa's rule still followed by the two branches of Carmelite nuns in this country—one descended from the French, the other from the Flemish foundation.

The book is illustrated with photographs and old prints, and is well documented, though the author has not been able, apparently, to consult Spanish sources.

M.B.

MARIA TERESA COUNTESS LEDOCHOWSKA, FOUNDESS OF THE SODALITY OF ST. PETER CLAVER. By Valeria Bielak. Translated from the Italian. (Published by the Sodality of St. Peter Claver.)

The life of Countess Ledochowska is an illustration of the romance of vocation. Nothing indicated the future foundress of a unique missionary institute in the self-willed, pleasure-loving child with a precocious talent for writing drama, nor in the very efficient—though always virtuous—lady-in-waiting at the grand-ducal court of Tuscany. She herself declared that as a child she never heard foreign missions mentioned in her home, devoutly Catholic though it was. The seemingly chance reading of an appeal by Cardinal Lavigerie to the women of Europe on behalf of Africa was the key to her vocation. Her

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correspondence, propaganda and editorial work on behalf of the missions grew till helpers became necessary. They gathered round her, and the Sodality of St. Peter Claver for the African Missions was formed, having its Mother-House at Rome. The nucleus of the Sodality is an institute of women living in community under a rule founded on that of St. Ignatius and devoting their lives to the service of the African Missions. It has also members, promoters and associates living in the world.

Circumstances led Maria Teresa to travel over Europe lecturing on the missions (in which her gifts as a linguist stood her in good stead), and founding branch offices of the various works connected with the Sodality. She worked without respite for over thirty years in spite of extremely bad health which prevented her taking either food or drink, save in quantities so small that her life seemed miraculous. Her Sodality, which is immediately subject to the Congregation of Propaganda, has had the blessing of four popes. Its statistics are amazing.

Many should read this book, but we cannot help hoping that another will some day be written which will give us more knowledge of the personality of the Countess, to whose intercession many wonders have been attributed since her death in 1922, a book in which her virtues will be shown by her own deeds and words rather than enlarged on by her biographers. We should like, too, to know more of her Institute, its rule and life. The members are referred to as religious, but we are not told whether they take vows.

The book (some 170 pages in stiff paper covers) is well translated, and illustrated by photographs. It may be obtained through the English branch office of the Sodality at the Benedictine Priory, Princethorpe, near Rugby.

M.B.

THE BLISS OF THE WAY: A Bedside Book for the Tramp. By Cecily Hallack. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; 7/6.)

'All the way to Heaven is Heaven,' said St. Catherine of Siena, 'for He has said, I am the Way.' St Thomas speaks of a certain *Beatitudo viae*, a foregleam of the perfect beatitude which awaits us *in patria*. With this as directing idea Miss Cecily Hallack has gathered together her marvellously diversified collection of thoughts. Her book is not one that can be read straight through in the ordinary way; but it will be read nevertheless and read and read again and again. I have tried it on a sick friend who, though professing to be nothing more than an amateur tramp on that blissful way, has found it