

## Book Reviews

WORDS FROM THE ALTAR. By Mgr. Kolbe. (B.O.W. ; 5/-.)

Five-minute sermons, welcome as they surely are in church, would seem to be things to avoid when gathered together in a volume. Such was the frame of mind in which I opened this book, but after a very short time I found myself apologising to the Right Reverend author for my unfounded and ungenerous sentiments. Brightness and originality are the notes of these Words from the Altar; they are light, brief and to the point; logical, compelling and of solidly practical value: there is no labouring of the obvious, no discoursing on the commonplace: they come very near to the high point of what the ideal short sermon should be—sound doctrine, presented attractively, not so thin as to be vague and yet not so overpacked as to be stodgy and ponderous. I hope all who have to preach will study this great little book and, if need be, learn from it and thus help to improve the general level of the modern sermon.

WOLSEY. By Hilaire Belloc. (Cassell & Co. ; 15/-.)

Mr. Belloc is a great virtuoso artist, and he also has many of the qualities demanded of a great historian. His historical portraits of great men, rich, vivid, compelling, are never detached unnaturally from their background, never cease for a moment to be significant and indicative of the critical issues of their times. What those issues usually are, and what those crises; what, in other words, are Mr. Belloc's principles of historical interpretation and judgement, is too well known to need detailing here. Their frequent reiteration provides ample and recurring scope for the exercises of hostile critics. James II, Richelieu, and now Wolsey, have been in their turn but so many instruments on which Mr. Belloc has played and re-played, and elaborated with the necessary variations and enrichments, the themes enunciated on the trumpets, as it were, of *Europe and the Faith* and the *History of England*. *Wolsey* is quite the best of the trio. He is, for Mr. Belloc, the man with whom it lay 'more than any other man whether the good or the evil fate should prevail': whether, that is, the Christendom of the Middle Ages, under the fecund influence of the Renaissance, should evolve happily into some 'glorious heritage of another kind,' or should suffer 'shipwreck and dissolution.' Wolsey, says Mr. Belloc, had it in his power to avert the disaster, but failed; and failed through two main faults: he was too ambitious for himself, and he had no vision. In a word, despite his many brilliant qualities, he was essentially superficial. And yet his fortunes and those of England stood or fell together. The Divorce was