

ST DOMINIC IN EARLY TUSCAN PAINTINGS. By George Kaftal. (Blackfriars; 7s. 6d.)

This book should not be missed. Though small in size and modest in price, it has great interest both for the scholar and the art-lover. It is a study of St Dominic, through the medium of 13th, 14th and 15th century Tuscan paintings, of which forty-one are reproduced; but though the focus of the book is on the Saint one can learn much about Fra Angelico and Francesco Traini whose panels depicting scenes from his life are shown at the end. The Church's custom, in those days, of telling a story by means of painted pictures seems so infinitely superior to our present-day method of moving pictures. The painting of St Dominic's mother, conceiving a whelp, bearing in its jaws a burning torch with which to set the whole world afire, is a powerful piece of symbolism, and tells a story as vividly and completely as a long narrative film. There are pictures by Fra Angelico and Francesco Traini which show the book written by St Dominic leaping out of the flames, while that of the heretic was burnt; the scene is like a dream, speaking to the unconscious, revealing so poignantly the indestructibility of Truth.

One of the loveliest examples of Francesco Traini's painting is the figure of St Dominic (Fig. vii) beardless, with an open book and the lily. The serenity and poise of this composition give it its great beauty. It is interesting to compare this with Fra Angelico's conception of the Saint (Fig. xi) with a beard, an open book and a staff. One feels that Fra Angelico has not just painted a type but a particular individual and has truly been called an 'expressionist' painter. To lovers of Fra Angelico there is an opportunity of being able to see clearly the development of his style as shown in the Predella to the coronation altarpiece (Louvre, Paris) and the Predella to the altarpiece at Cortona (Cortona Museum). The Cortona paintings, influenced as the author says by the Louvre Predella, in each case are richer in design and the forms more carefully organised. Perhaps the most charming picture of all is that of the angels bringing bread to the friars when they had scarcely a morsel left.

The first complete life of St Dominic was written by Theodoric of Appodia in 1290, as the author explains in his preface, and for that reason he has used this manuscript in translation to accompany the illustrations; this makes very delightful reading. It is a most enjoyable book—the first of a series; it may be noted with pleasure that Dr Kaftal is preparing three more.

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POST-WAR CHURCH BUILDING. A Practical Handbook. Edited by Ernest Short. (Hollis and Carter; 30s.)

It is natural curiosity that leads one to look at the illustrations of an expensive and ambitiously-ordered book. The frontispiece, weakly-designed *mélange* of ecclesiastical commonplaces, described