

## *Blackfriars*

SERMON NOTES ON THE SUNDAY PROPERs. By Father F. H. Drinkwater. (Sheed & Ward; 3/6.)

The discerning eye and the hearing ear will find sermons in unsuspected places—in stones and in the running brooks and even sometimes in pulpits; but sermons in books almost of necessity cease to be sermons in the ordinary sense and, if they are to attract, they must have qualities whose absence is of no great matter outside a printed book. I suppose only preachers read volumes of collected sermons and there are not enough preachers to justify publishers in hoping to make sermons best sellers. Father Drinkwater's fifth volume of Sermon Notes is apparently meant as an aid to the preacher. To the ordinary man merely in search of a book it may appear dry. (Why should 'dry' be a term of reproach in view of the English climate?) But it may be of excellent use to anyone on the lookout for a very suggestive meditation book. Each sermon-outline occupies no more than two or three pages: there is no scope for fine writing or literary elegance, and it is vain to look for any other beauty than the anatomical beauty one would find in a skeleton or a neatly drawn map. These plans may prove a boon to the harassed preacher anxious about what he is going to say next Sunday evening.

K.

MY SINS OF OMISSION. By Jacques Debout; translated by J. F. Scanlan. (Sands & Co.; 2/6.)

This is a very original work professing to be, in the author's description, a brief compendium of our sins of omission in the guise of an examination of conscience. If it were used to any serious extent as a preliminary to confession, the Sacrament of Penance would become an added burden both to penitent and confessor. But the author does not mean it exactly as a penitent's manual: he chooses this ingenious form for a very effective satire which is truly more piercing than any two-edged sword. Conscience is a mysterious thing and very much my own intimate possession. The weakness of M. Debout's using it as a medium for satire is precisely that conscience cannot be examined by anyone but myself. The Confessions of St. Augustine are truly the Saint's autobiography; but M. Debout's *Sins of Omission* are the general confessions of everybody else. But he drives home some excellent points—as relevant to English Catholics as they seem to be to French. The translator has dealt skilfully with a difficult piece of French. Why does he call Dominicans monks?

K.K.K.