

Bossuet's methods are far from blameless. He uses her confidential letters in public controversy without her permission, and always to her detriment. But it cannot be denied that he was as sincere as she was, and genuinely felt that her brand of mysticism was dangerous, and that its effects on others would prove pernicious in the extreme. For she was not content with the hidden life of a mystic, but was determined to form a spiritual *élite*, especially in Court circles.

But the main interest for readers of *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* is the vivid picture of the spiritual climate of seventeenth-century France—the France in which so many Orders of nuns have their origin. Here we see the flight from the liturgy, the reckless production of ready-made and highly emotional mystical formulas, imposed on communities as a substitute for the Divine Office. These personal and extravagant effusions, that few could recite with conviction, were obstinately clung to by successive generations of nuns as though they were the very oracle of God, and acquired by constant repetition a quite fictitious sacredness. Even Fenelon could write that 'it was a strange thing that those who wanted to follow a way which meant being attached to nothing should be so attached to the way itself and those who counselled it'. (p. 97.) Perhaps Bossuet, whose stomach was turned whenever he read her book (p. 107), saw further into the future than did Fenelon, and was less concerned with the fate of one innocent woman than with the health and sanity of the many who followed her.

GODFREY ANSTRUTHER, O.P.

CONFIRMATION STORIES. By a Sister of Notre Dame. (Sands & Co. Ltd; 5s.)

This collection of good, varied stories should prove very useful to those who have to instruct children for the sacrament of Confirmation. Their value is increased because practical issues are not far in the background; and the making of good resolutions, etc., is made to seem nothing but normal. No doubt it is as a result of practical experience that the authoress gives most of her attention to the gift of fortitude, referring to the other gifts (with the exception of the gift of wisdom in the story about Saint Stephen) only by implication.

E.B.

THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD and SELECTIONS FROM THE LITTLE FLOWERS OF ST FRANCIS. Edited by Hugh Martin, C.H., D.D. (S.C.M. Press; 8s. 6d.)

The S.C.M. Press has given us a well-printed edition of these two well-known works: an anonymous translation of Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God*, and selections from Roger Huddleston's translation of the *Fioretti*. Brother Lawrence was a seventeenth-century