

nothing, I feel, to be detracted from this praise. Perhaps I am wrong in regretting that there is very little to add to it. Father Knox did not set out to convert the symposiasts. He undertook (and very laudably) to show the general public befuddled by 'big names' how little worthy of reverence were their wearers' religious conjectures. He apologises charmingly if he seems to be 'endeavouring to bludgeon the symposiasts out of their last remaining contact with Christianity,' and I am perfectly certain that he is not. But I am pretty sure, too, on his reading of their misunderstandings, that he has hardly an adequate conception of their interior and exterior difficulties. 'Curiosity by itself (he suggests) ought to bring men to church to find out what is being said there.' Perhaps it does. A Catholic editor was once asked if there were any Catholic periodicals he would like to leave on the seat of a railway carriage to give an idea of the length, breadth, height and depth of the Faith to the next traveller. One might put a parallel question with respect to the average Catholic sermon, which—unless, like Miss Rebecca West, he has a taste for ritual—is all the stray sheep intruding a nervous nose into the fold is likely to take away with him. Perhaps an honest Catholic symposium as to 'Why They Stay Outside' might have its uses? The main difference between the symposiasts and ourselves is (as Father Knox admirably puts it) that they think religion is something they might get hold of; and we know it is something that has got hold of us. No one will assume the yoke of a Christ misunderstood and unloved; and how is the symposiast to be brought to love and understanding? *Sed quis te invocat nesciens te? Aliud enim pro alio potest invocare nesciens.*

H.P.E.

LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES. Vol IV: Monks, Friars, Nuns.
By G. C. Coulton. (Cambridge University Press; 10/6.)

This is the fourth volume of the reprint and extension of Dr. Coulton's *Medieval Garner*. The complete work consists of translations of documents from multifarious sources illustrating the whole of medieval social life. It is unique in value; no similar acquaintance with the period could be obtained without years of study in several languages. The present volume is confined to monasticism.

Let us be quite clear as to its material. The essential idea of all monasticism is the following of the evangelical counsels in order more expeditiously to observe the two-fold precept of

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charity common to all Christians. The discussion of the value of this idea is not an affair for historians. But the means taken to realise it in time, lies within their field. The Church, apart from the hierarchy divinely instituted for the ministry of grace, has, from time to time, sanctioned certain men to set up monastic families, not to supersede that hierarchy but to assist it. The historian is interested in these institutions from several points of view. He may concentrate upon their founders, or the great men they have successively raised up. He may study their various forms of government, the relative merits or demerits of their politics. He may consider them in their economic aspect, their dependence and their effect upon the material life of the community.

Dr. Coulton's interest lies elsewhere. What he is concerned to discover is the social life of the mass of monks, the ordinary life of the ordinary individual monk; what his outlook was; what his ambitions were; what other people thought about him. It is unnecessary to insist on the gravity of such an enquiry. In order to form a sound judgment on the history of any institution it is not enough to know its laws and constitutions, its theory, or even its brighter lights. To know such things is essential, but it is also essential to know how most of its members generally behaved.

In a brief review it would be pretentious to venture any judgment in this matter. Indeed a judgment is at this stage scarcely possible. Medieval history—in all its branches and especially in monasticism—has suffered considerably from its association both with the Romantic Revival and with those social reformers who create Golden Ages as a remedy for their own. Its objective study, in England at any rate, is only just beginning. The results, we may safely say, will lack the theatrical glory of the revivalists. But they will have the nobler, if grimmer, dignity of truth.

We can think of no better introduction to such a study than these volumes. Of this one we make two criticisms. First, a domestic issue. In Dr. Coulton's mind, apparently, there is little distinction between Franciscans and Dominicans; for him they are both just 'Friars.' This is unfortunate, because their differences are profound and must have been reflected in their social life. (The conversation between a Franciscan and Dominican over the merits of the Abbot Joachim, related in Salimbene is an instance that occurs to us.) It would have been of great interest if Dr. Coulton had clarified and accentuated their respective positions.

Secondly, we are doubtful if the insertion of St. Jerome's letter to Eustochium is relevant, and whether it does not betray a bias. It is entitled 'The Ideal Nun.' This means that Dr. Coulton has introduced ideals and theories, and these are not his material. We do not, of course, deny the influence of St. Jerome's ascetical propaganda—does not St. Theresa in the sixteenth century tell us of the great effect of his letters upon her? But investigation of the social life of a period is not concerned with the spread of ideas. And further, if we admitted the insertion of this letter we should demand other accounts of theory as well. St. Jerome's language is rhetorical, and the exhortation to virginity made by contrasting it with the discomfords of marriage, fails to edify us. (It was doubtless actual enough in the corruption of that time.) But to have been fair, Dr. Coulton should have included some more balanced statements, let us say from Cassian or even the tranquil sanity of an article by St. Thomas Aquinas.

Æ.M.

MORE'S UTOPIA AND HIS SOCIAL TEACHING. By W. E. Campbell. Pp. 164. (Eyre & Spottiswoode; 7/6 net.)

This very thoughtful commentary on the religious and social philosophy of Sir Thomas More is bound to help to a better understanding of the *Utopia*. Haply it may persuade us to read again that famous book. (For the *Utopia* has been so long a classic that we are for the most part content to leave it at that; a work that demands our respect but no familiar acquaintance.) A 'fruitful and profitable book'—the *Utopia*—'a fruitful, pleasant and witty work,' according to Ralph Robinson, who translated it into English in the contracted days of Edward VI and was perplexed and grieved that its author remained a Catholic. It was lamentable to Robinson that Sir Thomas More 'could not or rather would not see the shining light of God's holy truth in certain principal points of Christian religion; but did rather choose to persevere and continue in his wilful and stubborn obstinacy even to the very death.' Good master Robinson, sometime fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, seeing that he gave us the first English translation of the *Utopia*, may be forgiven these melancholy words; after all he was anxious to stand well with his old schoolfellow, Cecil.

The *Utopia* has been regarded as a Communist manifesto in some quarters. Yet Beer, the Austrian scholar and historian of British Socialism, could see Sir Thomas More as 'one of