

## Book Reviews

DE MATRIMONIIS MIXTIS EORUMQUE REMEDIIS. By Fr. Francis Ter Haar, C.S.S.R. (Turin : Marietti, 1931. Pp. viii, 195; Lire 11.)

The Church's prohibition of mixed marriages does not always appear to be taken seriously in this country, since their frequency obscures their evil consequences, and the comparative ease with which dispensations may be obtained is interpreted as a sign of approval. Yet the fact is that the Church when she permits mixed marriages does so very much under protest, and generally acquiesces in them as being the lesser of two evils. Moreover it is not always realised that whenever the faith of the contracting party or the children is placed in jeopardy, such marriages are prohibited by the Law of God, and not merely by the ecclesiastical Legislator.

In this book the evils of mixed marriages are laid bare before the reader's eyes without any disguise. The author has combined theory with practice, taking his stand by theology and Canon Law. In the first chapter after giving the most illuminating papal documents which deal with this subject, sound arguments are given for the Church's severe attitude towards mixed marriages. The second chapter deals with dispensations from the impediment of mixed religion, and the conditions required by ecclesiastical law for a licit and valid dispensation are fully explained. The doctrine of this chapter is most important, and may help to dissipate any foggy thinking which may have arisen as a result of the recent instruction given by the Holy See (14th January, 1932) and which has received a good deal of publicity in the Catholic Press. The last chapter is especially valuable as it suggests ways and means to Ordinaries, parish priests, confessors, and the laity, in order to avert mixed marriages. In a supplement a method is given of dealing respectively with (1) those who have already contracted a mixed marriage with a dispensation, and (2) those who have invalidly contracted a mixed marriage without a dispensation. Extremely useful documents and statistics from various countries appear in appendices. Among these are to be found some shrewd observations of the late Archbishop Whiteside, who does not hesitate to say that 'it is because mixed marriages, generally speaking, *jeopardise and enfeeble the faith*, that the Church's traditional attitude towards such marriages has ever been one of hatred and abhorrence.' Further, he observes, 'we come across a deadly law ruthlessly working itself out, and it is this : that beginning with one mixed marriage, the mixed marriages springing from that initial one *increase* almost in geometrical

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progression, *from generation to generation*. . . . From these spring families that are nominally Catholic, and those distressing Protestant families bearing surnames which for generations had been associated with Catholic Ireland or Catholic Lancashire.'

A.F.

THE SEVEN NICHES. By Egerton Clarke. (London: Cecil Palmer; 2/6.)

Mr. Egerton Clarke is a Catholic poet whose earlier volumes have won praise and popularity. In *The Seven Niches* he breaks new ground and offers a long poem in the form of a Catholic legend. The idea has the charm of originality and the flavour of experiment: both are justified. He has succeeded in a difficult task. A long poem such as this will tax any poet's sincerity and prove whether he is capable of sustaining his inspiration to the end. Even the physical strain of producing a long poem defeats many a writer. It demands vision, uniformity of mood, consistent style, and balanced expression. A standard tone must be maintained, together with a definite level of inspiration. Atmosphere must be created and upheld. Facility of expression, obvious clichés, commonplace rhymes may creep into a purely narrative poem, where the story is the first thing that matters. Tennyson and Masefield are examples of such almost inevitable lapses. But *The Seven Niches* is more like a richly embroidered tapestry than an unadorned tale. Every detail is complete in colour and execution; every tiny piece will bear close inspection. That is the author's triumph. He has weighed every word, re-cast every phrase. He has considered every image, every metaphor before giving his final sanction. Therefore the poem has emerged clear-cut, glistening, chaste as a masterpiece in stained glass.

Because the poem was not easy to write it is not easy to read. It does not carry the reader along with easy rhyme and dancing rhythm. For its understanding there must be concentration—even a mood of spiritual sympathy, almost of devotion.

E.E.

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS. By Alban Butler. A new edition, corrected, amplified and edited by Herbert Thurston, S.J., and Donald Attwater. Vol. vii, July. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1932; 7/6.)

This new edition of Butler's incomparable work so valiantly and ably undertaken by Father Thurston, has already on the appearance of previous volumes called forth the admiration and