

Blackfriars

SPIRITUAL WORKS OF PÈRE VINCENT HUBY, S.J. Translated from the French by a Religious of the Order of St. Benedict. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd.; 7/6.)

The first Jesuit House of Retreats in France was established at Vannes in Lower Brittany, in 1650, and Père Huby was its first Rector. More than forty years of his priestly career were spent giving the Spiritual Exercises to various classes of people by whom he was held in universal veneration. Many favours were attributed to his intercession both before and after his death. This volume of his writings will be welcomed by many, and their appreciation will be increased by the fact that the translation has been so well done.

The 'famous' Retreat for Ten Days holds the first place in the book, but the Minor Works, and especially the Spiritual Maxims, are not less valuable.

The Foreword warns the reader that 'some of Père Huby's expressions concerning self-surrender and abnegation may startle the ears of a pleasure-loving generation.' It might be as well to add, on the other hand, that for souls of another cast the meditations on venial sin and humility will need certain explanations.

M. D.

YESTERDAYS OF AN ARTIST MONK. Translated from the German of Dom Willibrord Verkade by John L. Stoddard. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1930; price 7/6.)

May the spiritual history of a Dutch artist be described as a 'Dutch interior'? If so, that is how we would sum up the contents and atmosphere of this book. Jan Verkade, born sixty-three years ago in the neighbourhood of Amsterdam, was the son of middle-class parents of Protestant antecedents who do not seem to have troubled much about the religious education of their children. But they treated them generously in other ways, and gave Jan the means to pursue a long apprenticeship to the painters' art. He narrates the history of his studies and practice in Holland, France and Italy. In Paris he was associated with many well-known people, such as Gauguin and Paul Verlaine, so that the history of his student days throws a valuable light from a new angle on the artists' Paris of the eighteen-nineties. But more important far for his own spiritual development were his sojourns in Catholic Brittany, and it would seem to be the faith and example of Brittany, more than any other human influence, that he owed his conversion. Very quietly and calmly he describes his soul's pil-

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grimace, giving us a picture of gentle, mellow tints. He makes it appear a simple, natural thing, and there is very little excitement. So we go on until he bids us farewell at the door of the Benedictine novitiate. Revoking our initial flippancy, we should describe the book finally as the pleasing self-portrait of a very likeable person.

J.M.

TWO MEN OF ALEXANDRIA: Philo, born B.C. 20; Origen, born A.D. 185. Some of their shorter sayings and incidental side issues, collected and translated by Herbert Gaussen, M.A. (Heath Cranton, 1930; pp. 81; 2/-.)

It was a good idea to collect some of these pithy sayings such as 'There are people who talk of good things but cannot practise them' (Philo), or the acute remark of Origen that 'Christ ventured on an enterprise that was beyond human nature, and venturing, succeeded.' 'God,' says Philo, 'is not like little children who play on the sea-shore, and make sand-heaps, only to knock them down with their hands.' Many of the sentences quoted from Origen are interesting, but a fair number seem rather pointless, perhaps because they are wrenched from their context; why tell us, for example, that 'the two blind men healed by Christ are (according to Origen) Israel and Judah'?

H.P.

EAST WIND. By Doreen Smith. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne; 7/6.)

I dislike the first ninety pages of this book. I find the frequent parentheses irritating, to begin with; the author is obtrusive, so that while she holds up the action to make her own personal observations her characters are like puppets waiting for the strings to jerk again; and I have the impression that the heroine's discontent is the author's own, and it is tiresome; on page 29 *Janet* goes out, much to her mother's annoyance, but she returns so quickly that the annoyance is entirely unconvincing; and there are other defects. The trouble seems to be that Miss Smith is striving to write a 'Catholic novel' instead of getting on with the story she has to tell: that really begins at page 90 and is as commanding as the earlier part is wearisome; it grips; the characters are alive, and *Janet* and *Martin* are delightful, but the mixed-marriage question must be regarded as fortuitous; *Teresa* wrecked her life not because she married a heretic but because she did not marry for love; and in the light of after events the account of the Protestant days and sneers