

Blackfriars

CAPUCHIN CLASSICS. Edited by Fr. Cuthbert, O.S.F.C. Vol. II: THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST. Eight sermons by Fra Mattia Bellintani da Salòs. (Sheed & Ward; 6/-.) Vol. III: A CAPUCHIN CHRONICLE. Translated by a Benedictine of Stanbrook. (Sheed & Ward; 5/-.)

To begin with Vol. III: it is the mark of literature, as opposed to a mere sequence of printed pages, to create an atmosphere into which, for the time being, it plunges the reader. *A Capuchin Chronicle* succeeds herein admirably, and the reader is soon caught up in the history of the early Capuchins, and breathes for a moment the invigorating air of all revivals. But it is a misfortune for this charming book that it has been mentioned in the same breath with *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*. The latter is a masterpiece, intense and tender; and never yet has its mingling of white-heat intensity with childlike tenderness—wherein precisely lies its charm—been reproduced in any other work. The mere memory of it suffices to bring home to us how thin, at times, is the atmosphere *A Capuchin Chronicle* creates. Its sweetest anecdotes, e.g., the novice's vision, recorded in chapter xxi, are vitiated, either by banal applications—as in this case—or more often by thinly disguised self-flattery: *peccissimus laudandi modus*, wrote an old Franciscan, three hundred years before the *Chronicle*, *se ipsum cum aliorum injuria prædicare*: it is a common fault among innovators. But still one rejoices to find, reaffirmed in this *Capuchin Chronicle*, two points of capital significance to Franciscans. One is the wise saying of Fra Eusebio, whom we find, in chapter 30, speaking to this effect: 'To be ever praying to God with a pure heart'—he is quoting from Chapter x of the Rule of St. Francis—is plainly what the life of a good Capuchin ought to be.' In other words the summit of the Rule of St. Francis is found in Chapter x on *Prayer*, and not—despite its eloquence—in Chapter vi on *Poverty*. The second point is thus given: 'The Capuchin Fathers,' we read in Chapter xi, 'insisted that the Congregation . . . was not founded for the many but for the few who wished . . . to keep the observance of the Rule as it had been practised in the days of our Father St. Francis and his companions. Those who prefer a freer life do wrong in entering this Congregation, for there are Orders in plenty having a less strict observance which they might choose. Let them enter these, and not rob this little house of God of its simplicity, where the true knights of Christ retire in order to give themselves up more unreservedly to contemplation and the work of their own perfection.' Precisely: but such perfect conform-

Book Reviews

ity with the life of Francis and his first companions is only possible as long as the group does actually remain tiny and secluded. Once it becomes *wholly* Franciscan, *i.e.*, active as well as contemplative, it must lower its idealistic notions. To-day the Capuchins, we rejoice to think, are one of the largest Orders in God's Church. *Verb. sup.*

And now I find I have hardly space for Vol. II in *The Capuchin Classics*, the sermons of Fra Mattia. Both editor and translator will read, I hope, profound praise in my statement that this book is no use as a sermon book to be hastily conned and mastered on occasion. Rather it is a profound and inspiring spiritual book on the Passion, to be read quietly and pondered over at leisure—a quarry whence may be drawn much of value both for personal meditation and, if need be, subsequent public delivery. Excellent has been the translator's work in both books.

O.F.M.

EVOLUTION AND FAITH. With other Essays. By Bishop Hedley. Introduction by Dom Cuthbert Butler. (Sheed & Ward; 7/6).

Seven scattered essays of a great English Catholic writer are here gathered together and republished for our greater advantage. I say advisedly 'a great writer,' for Bishop Hedley is that. The depth of his wisdom, the wide sweep of his knowledge, the clarity and beauty of his prose entitle him to the description. It is probably too little realised at present. No doubt there are many who appreciate him, but there are far more who do not yet realise his place in the literature of the Catholic revival in England.

These Essays were published in the *Dublin Review* (with the exception of one which appeared in the *American Ecclesiastical Review* in 1897) between the years 1871 and 1881. Their subjects range as widely as their author's knowledge. *Evolution and Faith*, a consideration of the theological aspects of the evolution theory, is almost as valuable now as it was when it was first published. It is amazing to think that Bishop Hedley was able to see clearly the issues at stake in the midst of the fresh clouds of controversy, when even now, after so many years, we have difficulty in separating what is false from what is true, what is of faith and what belongs to science. 'Pope Leo XIII and Modern Studies' and 'Text-books of Philosophy' are linked together by their common subject of the revival of interest in St. Thomas and his philosophy. What an ardent Thomist