

THE LETTERS OF JOHN OF SALISBURY, Vol. I. Edited by W. J. Millor and H. E. Butler. (Nelson; 50s.)

Many hands have co-operated in the preparation of this volume for publication. The text of the letters on which the translation is based was fixed by Fr W. J. Millor, s.j. The translation was made in the first instance by the late Professor H. E. Butler, revised by Professor R. A. B. Mynors and revised again and seen through the press by Mr C. N. L. Brooke. Mr Brooke is also responsible for the notes and introduction as well as for the arrangement and dating of the letters and the appendices. As might be expected, this team of scholars has produced a most thoroughly competent piece of work which will be welcomed by students of twelfth-century literature as well as by enquirers into the administration of the Church in England during the episcopate of Theobald of Canterbury.

This volume contains the one hundred and fifty-three letters which make up the first collection of the letters of John of Salisbury. Though they were all written while John was attached to the Curia of Archbishop Theobald, only a proportion of them are official letters. These throw a valuable light on the law and administrative procedure of the Roman and episcopal curia as well as showing the policy and achievement of Archbishop Theobald. But besides official letters, sometimes indeed included in them, there are the personal letters in which the learning and character of John of Salisbury emerge in so far as character does emerge from letters of this kind. There can be no doubt as to the wide learning of the writer. His quiet humour appears from time to time. There are examples of his gift for painting a friend or an enemy in short quick strokes with an almost friendly malice. But for all that one feels that there is a great deal in these letters that one misses. We are not of the circle of the elect to whom the allusions and suggestions were obvious when the letters were written; they are no longer obvious to us and perhaps can never be recaptured with certainty. This makes translation a heartbreaking business. Perhaps no higher praise of this volume could be written than that not more than half-a-dozen times is one tempted to quarrel with the translation; and the introduction is written in a style worthy of John of Salisbury.

URBAN FLANAGAN, O.P.

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This is a welcome first number of a new periodical publication devoted to the history and antiquities of the diocese of Dublin. It is primarily intended to make more generally known the sources of Dublin diocesan and parochial history. Its editors promise that it will