

Book Reviews

to be prepared to face. History repeats itself, and from the diary of a Franciscan Missionary of Mary which appears this year in their 'Annals' we see that a quarter of a century has not altered China or the Chinese very much. It is to be regretted that European Government officials do not heed the warnings of Missionaries when trouble is pending. This is brought out very clearly in the account of the Boxer rising in 1900.

M.F.

TALES FROM THE BIBLE. By Walter De la Mare. (Faber and Gwyer; 7/6 net.)

This work instantly challenges comparison with 'Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare' but there is no odium in the comparison. To the average layman, oppressed and circumscribed by the *il faut vivre* spirit of the age, De la Mare has rendered a signal service. In the bleak desert of modern literature unique work is a welcome oasis to the parched seeker after truth and beauty. The tales open in the Garden of Eden where God walked and talked with Adam at evenfall. The grace and beauty of Eve is limned from a poet's palette. Her temptation and her fall are fraught with dramatic intensity and upon her folly, the source of a world of misery, one speculates in vain. Besides, who would judge his mother?

The perfect story of virtue triumphing over evil is surely contained in the story of Joseph and his Brethren. Could there be a happier ending than the re-union of Jacob to his loved son in the full splendour of his sovereignty over Egypt under Pharaoh?

The cosmic catastrophe of the Flood begins in an atmosphere of cruelty, lawlessness and rebellion and inevitably and relentlessly works up to a thunderous fortissimo in the description of a world stormed to destruction in the anger of God.

The other tales of Moses, of Samson, and of David and Goliath are on the same high level and to those of us whose memories of these heroes have been dimmed by neglect or dulled by compulsory acquaintance, De la Mare has made them live vividly and humanly against a background of riotous colours, of gorgeous raiment, of throbbing and purposeful movement and of that magnificent achievement that makes the Old Testament the most thrilling book in the world—so thrilling because so true. This modern Virgil will unfold and interpret for us the mysteries and meanings of the Old Testament and we shall be the richer for his poet's vision.

M.A.C.