

SAINT CATHERINE IN TUSCAN PAINTING. By George Kaftal. (Blackfriars Publications; 10s.6d.)

To review this book is a gracious task. It is difficult to overpraise this style of hagiography so happily inaugurated in *Saint Dominic in Early Tuscan Painting*. The saints often suffer at the hands of their admirers, as Saint Catherine has certainly suffered from some of her hagiographers. Her life, her work, her miracles, her ecstasies are tempting to psychiatry and psychoanalysis; and because the study of introversion belongs to twentieth century self-consciousness the medieval saint is misinterpreted. It is true that certain aspects of her life seem to lend themselves to such interpretation, and so it is easy to forget that she is a woman of her own age, her own city and her own social class. No study of her life which neglects these factors can be a true one. The only way in which it is possible to obtain authentic interpretation of any life is by examination of contemporary documents. In the Middle Ages pictures were widely used for instruction and so contemporary paintings should form one important basis for reconstruction in that period. Doctor Kaftal has shown us what Tuscans living and working within two hundred years of her death knew and thought about a Tuscan saint. Every picture repays the most careful study; one may find there realism, idealism and allegory. A brief notice in the preface puts the reader in possession of the salient facts of the life; the pictures might almost tell the rest. But, in order that nothing may be wanting, the letterpress before each different 'scene' is taken from Father Fen's English version of her life, written by her confessor Blessed Raymond of Capua. (Is it too much to hope that Blackfriars Publications will bring out a reprint of the delightful book?) All lovers of Saint Catherine owe Doctor Kaftal a deep debt of gratitude for giving us our Saint in her reality: virile, deeply versed in the things of God, and passionately devoted; a great woman of her own time and race, and a great saint. The work of the publishers must not be forgotten, since their craftsmanship has made the book a thing of beauty.

*Saint Catherine in Tuscan Painting* is a book to possess, to study and to meditate upon.

S.M.C.

ABBOT MARMION. Edited by the Monks of Glenstal. (Mercier; 12s.6d.)

It has been said that Abbot Columba Marmion possessed the gift of expounding the spiritual life in all its primitive fulness and simplicity. 'It is very simple, it is resumed in one word: Christ' (p. 121). 'For me Jesus is everything' (p. 42). He has reintroduced our generation—and how much it needed this—to all the depths and the riches of the 'mystery of Christ' into which we are caught up by the adoption of sons. He learnt his 'gospel' from St Paul and St John, pondered and relived it in the liturgy, and expounded it according to the tradition of the Fathers and the theological prin-