

REVIEWS

OUR LADY IN OUR LIFE. By M. V. Bernadot, O.P., translated by Professor Mary Ryan. (Mercier Press; 8s.6d.)

In recent years there has been a renewal of devotion to our Blessed Lady, a renewal that is attributable in part to the happenings at Fatima. It is therefore very appropriate to have translated and made available to a bigger circle of readers this particular work by Père Bernadot. Here we have expounded simply yet profoundly the function and rôle of the Mother of God in the spiritual formation of the Christian. Taking as his starting point the divine Motherhood of our Lady, stressing that thereby she is the Mother of *Christus totus*, that is of all who are regenerated in Christ through baptism, Père Bernadot applies this doctrine to the rôle of Mary in the means of our sanctification. Thus we learn her part in the sacraments, in prayer, as mediatrix of grace. We are given too an instructive chapter which sets forth how our Lady's influence helps us sanctify all the humdrum tasks and duties and the seemingly insignificant circumstances that go to make up our daily life.

From the pen of such an authority as Père Bernadot we expect a book that is compact in doctrine and enlightening in exposition. Nor are we disappointed in the present volume, wherein the subject is treated in masterly fashion. For such an able presentation we are indebted in no small measure to the skilful manner in which the translator, Professor Mary Ryan, has discharged her task.

TERENCE NETHERWAY, (O.P.)

THE PASSION OF THE INFANT CHRIST. By Caryll Houselander. (Sheed & Ward; 6s.)

None other than our Blessed Lord himself has demanded that we become as children if we desire to enter the kingdom of heaven. We witness our re-birth in Christ through baptism, and though we grow in grace (especially as conferred by the sacraments) 'unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ', we must ever retain something of the simplicity, innocence, spontaneity, generosity, docility of the child. The revelation of the Fatherhood of God, and the need for man to realise his utter and complete dependence on his heavenly Father is the keynote to the understanding of the sermon on the mount. Indeed, this obedience to and acknowledgment of God's Fatherhood are testified to in our Lord's gestures and words throughout his public ministry. But in a world that has bartered the spirit of the gospels for mammon, that has forsworn reality and arrogantly sought to live by a token, that has become increasingly self-assertive and artificial there is special need to re-learn and re-acquire a childlike habit of soul.

Miss Houselander has taken the theme of the infant Christ for

her book, and unfolds to us through the image of a child the redemption of the cross. Christ is born anew in us through grace, divine life is given and entrusted to us in order that we might live a Christ-like life. In re-living Christ in the world, we must assimilate the principles that governed his life at Bethlehem and Nazareth. Just as Bethlehem has neither meaning nor significance apart from Calvary, so also does our life become empty and unintelligible if unrelated to the Mass, if our living is not fashioned after the Eucharistic life of Christ. These age-old truths the authoress repeats for us, but in a setting that is new, that is discerning (particularly when she is tracing the qualities that make for childlikeness) that is penetrating and meditative.

TERENCE NETHERWAY, O.P.

THE NINE FIRST FRIDAYS. By Rev. J. O'Connell. (Burns Oates, 2nd Edition; 5s.)

This book is concerned with devotion to the Sacred Heart as centring in 'the Great Promise'. In his opening chapter the author gives a brief account of the life of St Margaret Mary, thus providing an historical setting for the promise and showing that whilst devotion to the Sacred Heart existed some centuries before the saint, she it was whom God chose especially to spread and promote this devotion throughout the whole Church. The following chapters examine the text of 'the Great Promise' as it appears in the oldest MS., and the author sets out cogent reasons for establishing its authenticity. Objections that have been raised against the nine Friday's devotions are met and answered both from the historical and theological angles and a sound interpretation of the promise is embodied in the final chapters. The need and use for such a book as this are obvious and it makes a worthy re-appearance.

T.N.

THOMAS PERCY, Seventh Earl of Northumberland. By M. M. Merrick. (Duckett, 1949; 15s.)

This exceedingly well-produced book is the first full-dress biography of its subject, the ill-fated leader of the 'Rising of the North' against the power and ecclesiastical policy of Queen Elizabeth. The author writes learnedly and enthusiastically of her hero. She will not accept the traditional views of the ordinary historians, who have seen in Thomas Percy but a weak and nerveless character, a failure as a leader, uninspiring, unattractive, and guilty of at least constructive treason. She on the contrary holds him to have been a manly man, brave and true, but the victim of circumstances too strong for him, the prey of Cecil's craft and Elizabeth's ruthlessness. And, in the main, she proves her case. It is a pity, however, that she does not take more pains to prove that Northumberland was a martyr in the strictest sense of the word. It has always been held by Catholics that he was definitely offered his life if he would but give up his religion and abjure his faith. Detailed proofs of this must have been produced at Rome before the (already deferred) Cause of Beatification of this good man could be proceeded with. But they are not given clearly