

Blackfriars

Thus if ten persons were baptised it would be inaccurate to say 'There were ten baptisms' and accurate to say 'There is one Baptism; ten persons received this one Baptism.' Or, again, if ten persons received the sacrament of Holy Eucharist it would be inaccurate to say 'There were ten Holy Eucharists' and accurate to say 'There is one Holy Eucharist; ten persons received this one Holy Eucharist.'

So, too, there is but one Sacrifice. And if ten priests offer up Holy Mass it would be inaccurate to say 'There were ten sacrifices of the Body and Blood of Christ' and accurate to say 'There is but one Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ; ten priests offered it up'—*i.e.*, not in its motus-actio mode, but in its motus-passio or applicatory mode.

V.McN.

LIFE OF ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA DI LIGUORI. By a Sister of Notre Dame. (Burns, Oates and Washbourne, Ltd.; 4/6 net.)

Few among the saints have had a more tender and ardent love for God and souls than St. Alphonsus, and few certainly have suffered more poignantly for that twofold love. Yet to the general public little is known of the life of this great saint. How many who continually use and love—for instance—his *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament* know anything more than the name of the writer?

This short life of him will doubtless introduce him to those to whom the fuller lives are inaccessible, though it were preferable that these should be read later. The present book is carefully but—especially in the first half—somewhat drily written. One has the impression of being carefully shown round St. Alphonsus by a very conscientious guide. It is a history, but not a living portrait, and while admiring the former one would prefer the latter.

M.M.

LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES. By G. G. Coulton. Vols. 1, 2, and 3. (Cambridge University Press; 7/6 net each.)

There are many ways of approaching a past civilisation, and each specialist is tempted to identify his part with the whole. The historian of the art of the middle ages, for example, would lead us to believe that nothing existed but cathedrals: the liturgist confines reality to choir schools and the Sarum Rite: the lawyer confounds the life of a nation with the development of

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the constitution; the philosopher sees the past as a battlefield of discussions which are decidedly Alpine; and the hagiographer peoples the ages with saints.

Thus a great truth is lost, the story of humanity distorted, and doomed revivals and returns encouraged to Golden Ages which never were. For, underlying these manifestations of art and thought and sanctity is social life, the daily humdrum happenings of the multitudes which make up mankind. We may well grant that the achievements of the spirit, the intellect and the creative imagination represent the peaks of human endeavour. But peaks belong to mountains, and mountains rest on, and rise out of, plains. If we would see the life of former generations truly, it is wise to remember the plains.

But the ordinary life of society is precisely the most difficult to record. The masses of men are inarticulate for posterity. It is hard to discover what they thought and how they lived. The existence of a law is easily determined; to estimate its effect entirely another matter. We have to turn from the usual materials of history, official documents, and public records to indirect sources, to the literature of a period, to letters, diaries and personal memoranda, to the subjects of popular imagination reflected in art. It is a laborious task, and one not easily marshalled into statistics. Its neglect by historians can be well understood. In the nineteenth century in England it was tackled by only one author—Thomas Wright. The new Cambridge school, however, under Mr. Coulton, are laying deep foundations, as the volumes under review eminently witness.

They are the reprints in four volumes of one bulky original work—a reprint with additions. They deal with (1) Religion, Folk Lore, and Superstition; (2) Chronicles, Science and Art; (3) Men and Manners; and the fourth is to treat of Monks, Friars, and Nuns. They consist of extracts from innumerable sources, ably translated, and each prefaced with a brief critical note of its authority. From the extensive nature of their contents it is clearly impossible to review them in any detail. To us their study seems essential to any sane conception of the middle ages. Their value is not diminished by the fact that the author has not obtruded his personal opinions. He has indeed selected the extracts; but their amplitude excludes one-sidedness. Saints have their place as well as sinners. And we may single out the delightful letters (Vol. 1, pp. 132-144) of the young Dominican Peter of Sweden (studying at Cologne under Albert the Great) to the Blessed Christina von Stommeln.

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One criticism is necessary—the perennial danger of extremes. We admit and advocate the truth that the new realities brought to light by this school are of great importance. But they neither monopolise importance nor are most important. Tragic enough that great ideas have amazingly slow influence in moulding society—a fact it would be disastrous not to recognise. Nevertheless, society only coheres by doctrine—a doctrine of some sort, and behind even the crudest social life there lie ideas. Further, the ultimate benefit of any civilisation to the future, its grade of value, comes from the truths it has perceived and the art it has created. To neglect this fact would be equally disastrous. It seems to be the temptation of the new school. We may quote one indication; it is, in a way, trifling, but it points to an attitude of mind. Writing of the Austin Canons, in a note, Vol. 1, p. 161, Mr. Coulton says: 'They were, in fact, practically monks, and are often so-called by mediaeval writers, though modern pedantry sometimes ignores this.' Monks and Canons have essential differences; to suppose their identity would betray ignorance of the definite and most interesting nature of a Canon. To know that mediaeval people sometimes used their names as synonyms is of value—it is a fact of social history, Mr. Coulton's subject. To make their confusion an objective reality is to fall into subjectivism which asserts that only what *we* think is.

A.M.

NEWMAN'S APOLOGETIC. By J. D. Folghera, O.P. Translated by P. Hereford. (Sands & Co.; 5/- net.)

The scope of this little book is wisely limited. Newman's defence of the faith is generally identified with his refinement of certain of its most important aspects. The University Sermons, the Doctrine of Development, the Grammar of Assent, and, more broadly, the Idea of a University—these properly represent him. And this view is the right one; for a defence of the faith must be contemporary, and in these books Newman establishes relations with specifically modern interests and ideas.

But Newman was not concerned with these particular problems alone. They were points he concentrated upon, the salient points, of his whole body of doctrine. His mind was historical and, therefore, sensitive to tradition, to the traditional and age-tested arguments. The framework of his doctrine was the catechism. It is precisely his attitude to these primary realities