

Book Reviews

that Almighty God could not perfectly easily fill his place—if so be He desired it filled? A Saint dreads nothing but illusions. His own success had been tremendous; his longing for solitude was not only natural but supernatural. His eye saw clearly the facts of Heaven and Hell; his continual personal contact with the Devil was not calculated to make him take chances. We can imagine him deciding on an infallible test—departure. It does not seem necessary to suggest any other reason. Perhaps this problem is insoluble; at any rate he was a Saint, and the Church proposes him as a model and an intercessor; and therefore we may well hesitate before we treat his flights as weakness. As the insight of a Saint passes that of an ordinary man, so perhaps some of his motives are beyond explaining except in terms so simple that they are almost too fine to seize.

Even this comment is a further tribute to a wonderful portrait; we find ourselves arguing with the writer as though the Curé were a mutual friend, living only a few miles away.

The translation is admirable.

N.H.

THE LETTERS OF PETER PLYMLEY, with other selected writings by Sydney Smith. Edited with an Introduction by G. C. Heseltine. (Dent; 6/- net.)

Sydney Smith wrote consistently on behalf of Ireland for over forty years and the Plymley Letters—published more than twenty years before Catholic Emancipation—are, in the main, an argument that England cannot afford, on military grounds, to deny justice to the Catholics of Ireland. The *Letters* are good reading; not, perhaps, quite such good reading as many of the articles in the *Edinburgh Review*, which unhappily are not included in this volume. The editor's choice in the matter of selections from Sydney Smith enables the reader to discern how strongly this whig Canon of St. Paul's disliked the opposition to the Reform Bill (the immortal Mrs. Partington speech at Taunton is given in full) and the conservative attitude to game laws and poor laws. There is also an essay of 1819 on the employment of boys as chimney sweepers—'boys are made chimney sweepers at the early age of five or six.' Sydney Smith pleads for greater consideration for the unhappy children sent up the chimneys—the evidence of the House of Lords Committee contains horrible stories of suffering and death—but declines regretfully to support the complete abolition of climbing boys, because this abolition involved 'great injury to property and great increased risk of fire.'

Blackfriars

From Mr. Heseltine's Introduction we learn that Sydney Smith was 'well prepared for the penny-plain frame of mind so acceptable to the Establishment,' while 'his younger contemporary, John Henry Newman developed the twopence-coloured mind.' Mr. Heseltine, enlarging on the comparison, decides that Newman wrote 'metaphysically and mystically in the *Apologia* and *Gerontius*,' and Sydney Smith 'logically and practically.' However, 'both rendered inestimable service to the cause in which they fought.' According to Mr. Heseltine Sydney Smith is 'in the true tradition of the bon-vivants' with 'his prototype of Chinon'; at the same time 'there is a very Franciscan air about the light-hearted virtue of this comfort-loving parson. . . . He was in the true line of the mountebanks of God.' Finally we are told that the wit of Sydney Smith 'does not bear repetition,' and that the best of it 'he has taken with him to the company of his fat friends Socrates, Francois Rabelais, Samuel Johnson, and Horace, and no doubt the Dumb Ox also.' What 'the enlightened common sense' of Sydney Smith would have made of all this we cannot tell. When St. Thomas Aquinas is labelled a 'fat friend' of Sydney Smith what can anyone make of it? But then Mr. Heseltine despises 'literary craftsmanship' as 'often no more than the trick of making half-baked ideas readable.'

But why does Mr. Heseltine allege that Dr. Johnson said 'nobody but a fool ever wrote except for money'? J.C.

THE SACRAMENTARY (*Liber Sacramentorum*). Historical and Liturgical Notes on the Roman Missal. By Ildefonso Schuster, Abbot of the Monastery of St. Paul's Without the Walls. Translated from the Italian by Arthur Levelis-Marke, M.A. Volume IV. (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1929, 15/-)

And so this majestic work proceeds, to be completed, we surmise, in a fifth volume. It is in truth a monument to the courage of its publishers and a happy augury for the future of the liturgical movement in this country. A reviewer of one of the previous volumes allowed himself to describe it as 'A sort of liturgical lucky-bag.' The phrase was an unfortunate one. It revealed too manifestly something of that spirit which prefers *Bona Mors* to Vespers, and all the fussy paraphernalia of popular devotion to the majestic simplicities of the liturgy. If our people are to be brought to nourish their Christian life upon the strong bread and meat of the liturgy, it is by such books as the one before us that that desirable end will be promoted.