

BLACKFRIARS

THEATRE

AFTER the surfeit of society plays, the wind seems definitely set towards the historical drama. *Richard of Bordeaux*, by Gordon Daviot, at the New Theatre, has had a merited triumph. Magnificently produced, its clear colours and clean lines are a joy to the eye, magnificently acted, it is an interesting example of the relative unimportance in a play of purely literary qualities as compared with action and character. The dialogue is trivial, often jarringly anachronistic, but the dramatic tension never flags; here is high tragedy. One is struck by the extreme similarity in the interpretation of Richard and his times with that in Gillian Olivier's *Broomscod Collar*—so much that one's first impression was that the young Catholic novelist was the author of the play also. But that I hear is not the case.

Another play of exceptional interest is *Francis Thompson*, produced at the suburban 'Q' Theatre, where its success has authorised its transfer to the West End. The author—so I am told by those best qualified to judge—has failed to present a Francis Thompson recognisable to those who knew him, but that, after all, was only to be expected. Those who know the poet only through his poems will at least find this presentation on the whole not at variance with their imaginings.

The theme is his brief friendship with Anne, that

' flower

Fallen from the budded coronal of Spring

And through the city streets blown withering'

the poor little prostitute who could reverence what Alice Meynell called his 'angelic purity,' who fed him when he was a starving tramp, and who deliberately fled from his life for fear his new friends would misunderstand their relationship.

The author has not yet full mastery of his medium; there is a sameness in consecutive scenes, and the characterisation inclines to the conventional, but the play is none the less intensely moving. Emotion never becomes sentimentality, and an admirable reticence concedes three brief utterances to reveal the supernatural basis of the poet's striving. The result is a final impression of beauty, and, what is rarer still, of genuine spirituality.

B. B. C.

LITURGY

AMERICA is not, perhaps, the country in which we should expect to find a flourishing Liturgical Movement. We regard it as the home of super-individualism. Generalisations on the subject are peculiarly misleading. And