

The last two books are more tenuously connected with the Bible. M. Girault's concern is to relate the Christ of the Gospels to life in the Church today, but his book is largely made up of his own experiences and reflections, much of it interesting and moving; he has travelled in Spain, both Germanies and Poland, collecting in addition to his own the reflections of informed Catholics: they remain anonymous, and perhaps the Spanish priest would need to be who said, '*Les communistes se taisent pour ne pas aller en prison. Pour les convertir? Le témoignage du martyr, mais pas du martyr contre eux, du martyr en résistant aux puissants, au pouvoir, et en vivant une vie évangélique.*'

The medieval Church was able to impose a truce on the perpetual warfare of the day in order that men might profit by a space of peace for their spiritual need: Mme de Lenval has gathered her notes together under a kind of spiritual interpretation of this, pleading for a truce from the various features of our age that equally hinder the soul, the garish lighting, the incessant noise, the superficiality and the strain. Some of what she says will seem a little eccentric, but among her '*idées maitresses*' is the need for an assimilation of biblical modes of thought as a counterbalance to the specialized intellectualism of the day, and her own kind of wisdom owes much to her love of the Scriptures and the liturgy.

BLNET WEATHERHEAD, O.P.

THE DEFEAT OF THE SPANISH ARMADA. By Garrett Mattingly. (Cape, 25s.)

Well-proportioned and written with verve down to every detail, here is scholarship which makes the contemporary sources, published and unpublished, come alive again. The connected series of historical scenes, which put the naval campaign in its setting, open with the execution of Mary Queen of Scots and close with the assassination of the Duke of Guise—twenty-two months during which the preamble was written to the doctrine of the continental balance of power which was to last until our own days.

The issues are kept clear without undue simplification. An occasional touch of *Bostonism* suggests that the political divines on the side of the old religion were somehow more swart and subtle, more traitorous and fanatical, than their counterparts on the side of the new; the nomenclature is more assured about cannons and culverins than about monks and seminarians. It disposes of many of the legends with which we were brought up; of Drake, the soul of manly honour; of Philip II, spiderlike and cruel; of a small English fleet whipping a giant adversary up the Channel; of a Protestant wind; of the massacre of castaways by the barbarous Irish. The enemy had no ship so large as Frobisher's *Triumph*, and the English fleet was like David only in that it had the longer-range hitting power. Goliath never toppled down, for Medina Sidonia, who comes out of the account with great credit, was never broken in battle and when all was over brought back home two-thirds of his fighting-ships.

Still, the great enterprise had foundered, more through logistics than martial action. The year before Drake had done more off Cape St Vincent by burning the cargoes of oak-staves for water barrels than at Cadiz by singeing the King of Spain's beard, for the heaviest losses were suffered during the nightmare northabout from hunger, thirst, and disease: men die before ships. And the final encounters off the Zeeland shoals were settled because the Spaniards were far from their bases and ran out of shot.

The event was decisive, politically more than militarily, for the war dragged

on for another fourteen years; the Spaniards, who had never commanded the Channel, were not blockaded nor were their revenues from the New World cut off, and the English enterprise of Portugal in 1589 ended in failure, almost as disastrous. But it was made clear that the religious unity of Europe was not to be re-established by force. The defeat left two religious ideas side by side—and the Pope not displeased that Spain, after all, was not God's chosen champion for the Church. It engendered a political myth more important than any contingent fact, of the victory of freedom for the weak over tyranny by the strong. A useful myth, if you also have the better ships and the better guns.

THOMAS GILBY, O.P.

THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE. By Morris West. (Heinemann; 16s.)

IRON IN THE VALLEYS. By John Parker. (George Ronald; 15s.)

Priests are familiar character in novels by now, and one suspects that they are sometimes introduced to emphasize a spiritual and moral dilemma which a story could otherwise not sustain. But Mr West's absorbing account of an English monsignor's investigation into the alleged sanctity of a deserter who was killed by the Communists in Calabria is in effect a study of the priestly character, freed by the impact of death (the monsignor is dying of cancer) and a living contact with the people who have been inexorably linked by the man who was killed. It is profound in its understanding of suffering and of the baffling modalities of faith, and at the same time tells us much of the miseries of the *Mezzogiorno*.

Mr Parker says that his book is based on the life of the heroic Father Carroll, parish priest of Merthyr, who built a church and established the Catholic Faith amidst the horrors of the industrialization of South Wales. It is an unpretentious record of simple duty, perhaps too arbitrarily pressed into the pattern of a novel, when biography would have been better.

I.E.

NOTICES

THE MASS, a Liturgical Commentary by Canon A. Croegaert, translated by J. Holland Smith (Burns and Oates, 2 volumes, 30s. each), is an admirable guide to the history of the Roman rite. But it is more than a work of antiquarian scholarship, for Canon Croegaert's commentary is always concerned with the Mass as a living reality, and his detailed account of words and actions alike is always alive to that pastoral understanding of the liturgy which animated the great reforms of Pope Pius XII. The whole work is to be warmly recommended to those who wish to make of the Mass the central spiritual reality it is meant to be.

THE MASS THROUGH THE YEAR, by Aemiliana Löhr, translated by I. T. Hale (Longmans, 2 volumes, 30s. each), is a guide to the liturgical year as it is revealed in the text of the Sunday Masses. More meditative than Canon Croegaert's book, it reflects the teaching of the German Benedictine Dom Odo Cassel in its patristic sobriety and in its recapitulation of the great Christian mysteries in terms of their liturgical expression.