

for. Since he is a Father of the Church, one would like to see in a Christian commentator at least a certain reluctance to dissent from his views or assert their insufficiency. There is room even nowadays for 'pious interpretation'. Unless we are prepared at least to suspend judgment on the many things in St Augustine which we find hard to accept or understand, and are willing simply to learn what he has to teach, we can never hope to translate into our own idiom of thought the truly Christian wisdom of this great scribe learned in the kingdom of heaven, who brought forth from his treasure so many things new and old.

E.H.

MEDIEVAL RELIGIOUS HOUSES, ENGLAND AND WALES. By David Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock. (Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd.; 42s.)

The authors have achieved a fine work in producing this book of reference on a subject that so constantly crops up in almost every branch of English history, whether religious or political, artistic or economic.

In a valuable prefatory *Notitia Monastica*, Dom David Knowles traces the development of the study of monastic remains from the notes of John Leland, who wrote in the days of the spoiler, down to the work of the great cardinal, Dom Aidan Gasquet, whose list of religious houses printed in 1888 as an appendix to the second volume of his *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries* 'has remained the only tolerably complete catalogue available to the general reader'. It is fitting that another Benedictine, assisted by Mr Neville Hadcock, should now give us what we may well call 'the complete catalogue', for it is difficult to imagine their combined work requiring in future years anything beyond small additions or corrections.

Dom Knowles has likewise contributed an excellent essay of some fifty pages on the origins and development of English religious life, whilst Mr Hadcock, the compiler of the map, *Monastic Britain*, published in 1950, has provided some interesting tables (pp. 359-65) showing the increase and decrease of the religious orders both in number of houses and of persons. From these we gather that the Austin Canons led the way with 230 establishments until Henry V in 1414 suppressed all alien monasteries, namely such priories or abbeys as depended immediately upon foreign ones. This first monastic suppression did not however affect religious who were subject to a central authority abroad such as the Cistercians or the friars. Benedictines before Henry V's reign possessed 225 houses, Cistercians 76, Premonstratensians 36, Gilbertines (the only English Order) 24, Franciscans 60, Dominicans 53, Carmelites 37, Austin Friars 32, Hospitallers 53. There were nine Charterhouses and a number of smaller orders owning about half-a-dozen houses each, and in all there were 1,053 religious establishments in this country.

It is with this vast amount of material that the bulk of the work (pp.

56-324) deals, but the authors have usefully appended notes on more than 250 collegiate churches or chantries served by bodies of secular clergy living a quasi-monastic life, and to these are added a catalogue of the academic colleges and halls of both universities, where also a community life existed.

W.G.

MIRACLES. By Jean Hellé. Translated by Lancelot G. Sheppard. (Burns Oates; 15s.)

THE SUN HER MANTLE. By John Beevers. (Browne and Nolan; 15s.)

Miracles are in the air these days. Of the two books under review, that by Jean Hellé (Morvan Lebesque) is the more critical one. It includes fakes like Nicole Tavernier and Rose Tamisier and controversial cases like that of Therese Neumann; but, not being a theologian or a medical expert, the author contents himself with reproducing accounts from other sources, such as the *Etudes Carmélitaines* or Dr Poray-Madeyski's book on Therese Neumann. This method has one disadvantage; for where no critical account exists the popular view is followed. Thus Hellé is, indeed, sceptical of Therese Neumann, but he describes with admiration the visions of Catherine Emmerich. Nevertheless the cases of these two stigmatics are very similar, and the latter's description of the miracles of Christ recorded in the Gospels contradicts the Scriptural accounts in important details. She sees, for example, how he 'draws near to the man sick of the palsy, takes his arm . . . and massages it' and gradually heals it—whereas the striking feature about this as about most of our Lord's other cures is the authoritative way in which they were brought about simply by a word.

Mr Beevers deals solely with apparitions of our Lady, especially with those that have received ecclesiastical approval. Lourdes, of course, and Fatima, La Salette, which is given more space than the others, and Banneux. The most controversial of these apparitions are those purported to have taken place at Beauraing, in Belgium, in the winter of 1932-33. Hellé, following the *Etudes Carmélitaines*, treats them frankly as an imposture of the five none too trustworthy children who claimed that our Lady was appearing to them. The arguments against their authenticity seem overwhelming, though according to Mr Beevers, who accepts it, the cult of our Lady of Beauraing was authorised by the Bishop of Namur in 1943.

Mr Beevers rightly closes his book with a chapter on the message of our Lady in all these apparitions: 'We must pray and we must do penance'. Yet one sometimes wonders whether the flood of books on such subjects is really a sign that we are heeding her words. There exists at present a very real danger that the Catholic public is all too anxiously seeking for signs and wonders. It was castigated in the well-known article of Mgr Ottaviani, 'On the Dangers of Credulousness', in the *Osservatore Romano* in February