

world is so strong, for it is divine love that undertakes great deeds, does not refuse hardships, faces dangers, strengthens the weak-hearted, spurs on transactions, and turns cowards into brave men, for it does not weigh difficulties by its reason but by its desires.

As effects naturally resemble their causes, so the greater the love for the end in view, the more strongly does it urge what will obtain this end. As water rises to the height from which it descended so fortitude is on a par with love as the weakest of animals will venture its life in defence of its young, regardless of its own danger. So in proportion to its strength, love for God produces fortitude. What else can be meant by the words of the Canticles, "Love is strong as death"?

REVIEWS

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS. Translated and Edited by Professor Allison Peers. In Three Volumes. Reprinted. (Burns Oates; 17s. 6d. each volume.)

The reprint of Professor Peers's authoritative translation of the works of St. John of the Cross at this particular stage of English thought has a particular significance. A less perceptive publisher might have shied at so large a call on his paper ration made by these three substantial volumes; but the time was ripe and the publishers judged it accurately. The desire for mystical writings has increased with every month of the war. At first it was only a superficial fashion to read about saints and the supernatural, but with the publication of Aldous Huxley's *Grey Eminence* and of the story of S. Bernadette by Franz Werfel, the desire deepened into a genuine interest. Many works of a mystical trend have been stimulating this interest; Professor Peers has himself published a widely read work on St. John of the Cross, *The Spirit of Flame*. But the time soon came when those whose interest had been roused and deepened should be led to the sources, and so in the midst of all the books about Carmelites the works of the Carmelite Doctor of the Church reappears in time, we hope, to dispel certain nascent heresies.

For a serious danger lies within this craze for the "spiritual," a danger perhaps illustrated by the increasing popularity of Spiritualism. Evidently the mystical movement is a compensatory reaction from the brutal realities of the material world of to-day, an escape from the horrors of bombs and battlefields. Men's senses have been filled with the harshness of war, and they search blindly for relief, for something soft to the touch, something sweet-sounding and colourful. They think to find this in mystical writings, in the realms of the "Spirit." But such an escape

implies a Mysticism Without Tears, evilly but accurately depicted in a recent review of two Carmelite books in the *Times Literary Supplement*. The reviewer declared that whereas mysticism was the same the world over, no matter what the religion in which it arose, yet its character was modified by the social and historical circumstances of the mystic. The severity and asceticism of the medieval and renaissance mystics, he thought, could not survive the age of the hot water tap; but he seemed to imply that modern mysticism will be just as genuine in its hot bath variety. In fact this description is true of what many are looking for, and in it the error is revealed. For true mysticism is never without an "inhuman" self-denial and mortification that are as harsh and stripping as the burst of an high explosive. The joys of the new life in Christ, the life of union, do not come except through the Cross; asceticism marches step by step the whole way with Christian Mysticism, though the character of the ascesis changes en route.

Now, therefore, is the time to overcome this softening and sentimental error with the very words of the master of mystical knowledge; and we urge all those who have so far been interested only in the sweet union of God away from the world to take up and read. The very first chapter of the first book begins with an outline of the two purgations through which the soul must pass before it reach a state in which God might perhaps bestow his Gifts. The soul is to be deprived of the pleasure of its desire in all things (cf. I, 21) "All rejoicing which implies not renunciation and annihilation of every other kind of rejoicing, although it be with respect to something apparently very lofty, is vain and profits not, but is a hindrance towards the union of the will in God." (I, 285.) It has been said that to understand St. John of the Cross the reader must begin at the end and open the third volume first, to read in *The Living Flame* such joyous phrases as: "Herein is the inestimable delight of the soul: to see that it is giving to God that which is His own and which becomes Him according to His infinite Being . . ." (III, 101). For one must know to what gleaming mountain top one is setting out before beginning the *Ascent* through the *Dark Night*. But this advice must be modified for those who have been saturated in Huxley and Heard, or even in Underhill, Sackville West and Werfel. They will need to be plunged into the icy words of the first two works to learn that sanctity is never easy, that union in the Spirit is seldom come by through the cloud of tobacco smoke. neither in the depths of a well-sprung settee, nor over the dishes of a plentiful table. So let them begin with Volume I and learn from the ordered work of the master the value of true asceticism.

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