

ment, but it is disappointing in a work that shows elsewhere so much advance in religious understanding. It is the more regrettable because the chapter on the 'World of lawful freedom', the world of Physics, reveals a quite astonishing agreement with so much of the Biblical Cosmology, studied more deeply. To the unscientific reader indeed, to whom this world of physics is unfamiliar, this chapter is peculiarly exciting in its almost startling confirmation of Genesis, as revealed by scientific 'spiritual exegesis'. One is left wondering how far the theories and hypotheses which Mr Heard puts forward so ably will be accepted by the average good physicist. The list of authorities quoted seems impressive and this whole section of the book recalls the parallel chapters in Le Comte de Nouy's arresting study, 'L'homme et sa destinée', written from somewhat the same point of view and with a similar intention. Both writers are concerned to show 'design and purpose' through the medium of modern science, both are far more successful and convincing in their preparatory chapters than in their positive solutions, but in the present case the contrast is more decided and more disappointing. A strain of irrational fantasy breaks through the accounts of evolution and regression till in the final sections we are left with a subjective, unconvincing picture quite unworthy of the careful thought of the beginning.

It is a pity that so much good work, so much imaginative study should culminate so disappointingly; but for the first half alone, this book is well worth reading.

ROSALIND MURRAY.

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI. A biography by Omer Englebert, translated and edited by Edward Hutton. (Burns Oates; 16s.)

The life of St Francis of Assisi is well enough known in this country to ensure interest in a new biography. During the last sixty years an immense amount of patient work has been devoted to the Franciscan source. By 1926 Dr Seton could write that no one worker could keep pace with the study of the whole subject. Where the *franciscanisant* could not keep up, the general reader could hardly find his way without a guide. The last scholarly Life in English was Fr Cuthbert's, which Sabatier thought the best in fifty years; but it was published in 1912. There was room for a new book written, if not better, at least differently, as M. Englebert modestly says in his preface. It is admirably done. The documents are left to speak for themselves as much as possible; the very full references enable almost every statement in the text to be controlled; there is an Appendix on the sources; there is a number of illustrations; the price, as such things go today, is reasonable.

There are—perhaps there will always be—serious differences of opinion about early Franciscan history. But reputable interpretations of St Francis are not so very far apart. The non-specialist

reader may well be left with the impression that this new portrait is the same in feature as that by Joergensen or Fr Cuthbert. It is after all what we should expect. Not that men have not been ready to read their own ideals into St Francis ('thus then and thus he must have been', as Fr Martindale once wrote), and some strange caricatures have resulted; but the worst exaggerations of subjective interpretation do not survive comparison with writings which are accepted by all critics as authentically his and which we still possess. In them St Francis himself yet speaks.

As this is probably the best modern Life of St Francis for the English reader, it is a pity that its English dress is not a better fit. The translation is sometimes awkward and occasionally unfortunate. 'The blessed one' has a curiously alien sound. Kilometres and metres might be given their English equivalents. Also for the second edition, there are some misprints, particularly the note on p. 184 which reverses the authorities and makes Fr Cuthbert an opponent of the Portiuncula Indulgence.

A.E.H.S.

THE GOOD DUCHESS, Joan of France. By Ann M. C. Foster. (Burns Oates; 8s. 6d.)

This is a book which one closes with regret. The life story of St Joan of France, who was canonised in the Jubilee year 1950, is surely unique. The little Valois princess, second daughter of Louis XI, King of France, was born in 1464, and died in 1504—forty years, and, humanly speaking, mostly years of suffering. When only twenty-six days old, Joan was betrothed to Louis, the little son of Charles, Duke of Orleans, afterwards to become Louis XII of France. In this book we are given a short but charming picture of Joan's childhood spent in the country far from the Royal Court, in the old Château of Limière where she was placed at the age of five in kind guardianship. We may well believe that the quiet of the woods and of the fields and the peace of the little chapel attached to the castle, which the child learnt to love, did much to sow the seeds of the deep sanctity of her later years.

It was a short childhood. At the age of twelve, Joan was married to Louis of Orleans, grown into a gay, high-spirited boy, who neither loved nor understood his child wife. He did not want to marry her, but dared not disobey the command of the much-feared Louis XI. Young as she was, Joan looked on the marriage as something God wanted her to do, and she determined to do her best to make it a success. Louis, however, had no such determination and with the passing of the years his dislike of Joan increased rather than lessened. As soon as the crown of France came to him and he felt free at last to do as he wished, he set about getting rid of his wife. With some difficulty he obtained the annulment of the marriage. Joan had been Queen of France a very short time. She was given a small province with the title of Duchess of Berry.