

of prayer and earnestly ask God for the grace of continual attention. By virtue of this initial effort and disposition, the whole prayer is rendered meritorious. We have an example of this in the case of a person who throws a stone. The stone travels a good distance, but the hand that threw it does not go with it. It is carried by the impetus with which it was first released. The same may be said of prayer, provided that he who prays is not wilfully distracted.' (pp. 30, 31.)

These quotations perhaps give some idea of the excellence of this treatise, which however is comparatively brief, occupying only sixty-eight pages of the total of eighty-five in the whole book.

WALTER GUMBLEY, O.P.

THREE WHITE VEILS FOR ALESSANDRA. By Lucy Prario. (Longmans; 18s.)

'Well-known Socialite becomes Carmelite' would be an inevitable American-style headline to sum up this graphic biography of an Italian marchesa who, early in this century, abandoned the glittering society life for the austerities of Carmel. Alessandra was the daughter of Marchese Antonio di Rudini, one of the architects of post-1870 Italy. The 'three veils' are those of her First Communion, of her wedding day when she married the Marchese Carlotti di Garda, and of her entry into Carmel as Sister Mary of Jesus.

Alessandra, after a conventional education, developed into a dazzlingly beautiful woman, much sought after in the European marriage market. Oddly enough, though she had ceased practising her Catholic faith, it was on religious grounds that she refused to marry an importunate Russian Grand Duke. She chose her own husband, a rich young aristocrat and a complete atheist.

The gay, irresponsible, outrageously extravagant social life only partly satisfied Alessandra. Always there were recurrent longings to return to the religion of her childhood. They were ephemeral. The death of her husband, after only a few years of marriage, were followed by four tempestuous years with d'Annunzio. Then the light of faith burst through. Alessandra, aware of an insistent vocation to the religious life, submitted and made a great renunciation. This was not easy as she had two adolescent sons. They were materially provided for but their mother's departure for Carmel caused them great grief, which found its echo in Alessandra's own heart. They were delicate youths and did not long survive their mother's abandonment of the world. The wearing of the final veil of her life was accompanied, in the beginning, with much pain and mental anguish. Her husband and sons dead, the foolish past buried in oblivion, Sister Mary of Jesus was alone. This remarkable woman, free of worldly ties, lived only

for God. And in Carmel, where she lived a life of prayer and austerity for the remaining twenty years of her life, she found the spiritual peace her restless soul had sought for so long.

KIERAN MULVEY, O.P.

MARCEL PROUST AND DELIVERANCE FROM TIME. By Germaine Brée, with an introduction by Angus Wilson. (Chatto and Windus; 21s.)  
BYRON and GOETHE. By E. M. Butler. (Bowes and Bowes; 30s.)

In his introduction to Mlle Brée's new book on Proust Angus Wilson suggests that there are too many guide books to the passing beauties of the Proustian world but that this one is different. There are and it is. It is also interesting and raises one or two possible questions about the uses of criticism. Particularly illuminating are her discussions of the time structure of *A la recherche du temps perdu* and she helps to elucidate with some skill that curiously vague and Eliotian sphere where the three times are held in a loose synthesis in which we pass to and fro in the manner of those in J. W. Dunne's *Experiment with Time* and where Proust's narrator projects himself into an anticipation of the future, relives his life in meditations retrospectively and focuses upon the present, finding a timeless world the spatial dimensions of which are constantly changing. This examination leads Mlle Brée to adumbrate and emphasize—very properly it seems—the recognition of the existence of identity which, as far as Marcel is concerned, is the important revelation which ensures the imposition of order upon previous chaos.

Mlle Brée also examines the relation of Proust to the narrator—Marcel. She asserts that many critics have tended to identify them 'reading from Proust's life into the novel and back again'. This, of course, is a perilous and sometimes foolish method, a product of that school of criticism which attempts to arrange Shakespeare's sonnets in a biographical sequence and which seeks to establish whether or not Keats had a 'hang-over' on the day he was supposed to have started to write the Ode to a Nightingale. Clearly, in Proust's novel, to be misled by the use of the first person is to create an insuperable number of obstacles to vitiate the art which prepares the reader for Marcel's revelation which leads to the outcome of a seemingly hopeless excursion. As Mlle Brée puts it:

'The point at which the narrator arrives at the end of the novel cannot possibly be superimposed upon the point of his departure, for this would bring the aesthetic validity of the novel's composition into question. The title of the book indicates a quest in which the narrator is engaged. How could he tell of his hopeless "search" if he already knew its successful outcome? The revelation at the end