

THE MESSAGE OF FATIMA. By C. C. Martindale, s.J. (Burns Oates; 10s. 6d.)

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO FATIMA. By Susan Lowndes. (Burns Oates; 1s.)

Fr Martindale's introductory remarks on the character of the Fatima apparitions as a 'private revelation' admitting only of human faith and liable to quite *bona fide* personal elaboration by its principal recipients, would by themselves make his book well worth having. He gives us besides two chapters that portray better than any other book in English the living characters of the three children, and the admirable operations of grace upon the two of them who died so early. His main aim however is to sort out the exceedingly confused tangle of evidence.

This falls into two groups (dealt with in the two *Parts* of the book) roughly as follows:

Contemporary: I. Newspaper reports, etc. (1917). II. Interrogations of the three children by Canon Formigao (Sept. 27, Oct. 12, 13 (evening), 19, Nov. 2, 1917). III. Other statements made by the children and subsequently reported.

Retrospective: IV. Letters and statements made by Lucia (1921-1948) including mention (? 1929) of Russia to her Bishop. V. Letters and statements by other eye-witnesses; and findings of the Canonical Commission (1922-1930). VI. Two documents written by Lucia (1937-8, or ? 1927) about Jacinta, and with first clear mention of angelic apparitions in 1916. VII. Two further documents by Lucia (1941-42) with first *public* reference to Russia.

The importance of discriminating clearly between these very various sources of evidence is obvious. Lucia's later documents are naturally couched in the style of the convent adult. To what extent does this influence her interpretation of her original experiences? The all-important insistence of our Lady at Fatima upon prayer (the Rosary), and repentance, those twin corner-stones of the Christian life, has for many only been obscured by an impression that Fatima stands for exaggerated and mechanical consecrations to the Immaculate Heart and political rebukes to Communist Russia. But it is not impossible that this impression is simply the result of a 'conventual' mode of expression, vulgarised by its uncritical propagandists, falling upon the ears of people less religiously attuned, politically more sophisticated than a sister in a Portuguese cloister. The very urgency of the Fatima message makes it imperative to dispel such misunderstandings.

This it is that Fr Martindale (a fervent believer in Fatima) sets out to do; with what success it is fairest to leave the reader to judge.

Mrs Lowndes' *Guide* is full of useful and otherwise unobtainable information for getting to and being at Fatima. C.R.