

reading this well told history of a Congregation which has done so much in the past, and will, it is to be hoped, do more in the future for the welfare of the English Catholic child. M.F.

THE LIFE AND LYRICS OF RICHARD ROLLE. By Frances M. M. Comper. (Dent & Sons, London, 1928.)

LE FEU DE L-AMOUR, LE MODELE DE LA VIE PARFAITE, LE PATER. Par Richard Rolle, traduits par D. M. Noetinger, moine de Solesmes. (Mame et Fils, Tours, 1929.)

Richard Rolle, hermit and contemplative, has not been fortunate in his English editors, who have all been non-Catholics and in varying degrees unequal to their task, either from want of sympathy and Catholic experience, or from serious lack of theological training. We make an exception in the case of Miss Deanesly, whose *Incendium Amoris* is a scholarly piece of work, and who refrains from amateur excursions into theology or mysticism. Miss Comper is not a scholar, nor does she imitate Miss Deanesly's self-restraint. So her book is an amazing jumble of miscellaneous information: historical, theological and mystical. Rolle, she says more than once, had an 'untidy mind,' so that his writings are disorderly and confused; but they are not so confused and disorderly as this book. The early chapters contain a picture of fourteenth-century Oxford, a history of the coming of the Orders in the thirteenth century, an account of the studies of the University, and there is even something about the problem of Universals. The remaining chapters of the first part deal with the life of Rolle; but it is hard even here to keep in touch with him, so oppressed are we by a welter of citations from the most various sources, Catholic and non-Catholic. After all this, it is a relief to get to Rolle's lyrics, which occupy the second and shorter part of the book, and which can be extricated fairly easily from the mass of commentary which surrounds them.

Our impression of the whole is that Miss Comper has undertaken a task which is beyond her powers. She confesses that she is no scholar, and it is clear that she is no theologian. Even as an historian she ought to have been aware of the view put forward by Dom Noetinger (*Month*, June, 1926) that Rolle had studied theology in Paris and was a priest and a doctor of theology before he took up his hermit life. It makes an immense difference to our judgment of his life and work. But Miss Comper has no suspicion of such a possibility, for she writes: 'We must not forget that, unlike Grosseteste, St.

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Edmund, and many other famed English writers, he had never visited the schools at Paris.' Moreover, one who has been to Rolle's birthplace ought not to put it four miles west of Pickering. Thornton is two miles east of that town. So also Fountains Abbey is south-west and not south-east of Byland.

Among other errors we noticed several puzzling pieces of Latin: *regulis locus* (p. 12), *De Triplice Via* (p. 148), *sacerdotus* and *sancti Dei Ricardi* (p. 183). Besides these, we believe that Miss Comper has used two familiar Latin words in an unjustifiable way. Both occur in reference to the same subject, the nine lessons of the breviary Office composed in hope of Rolle's canonisation. She writes, 'These nine lessons are generally known as the *Vite* The *Vite*, being the main source of his life, are of great importance' (p. 4). And so *passim*. The nine lessons might reasonably and properly be known as the *Vita*; but why *Vite*? Again, referring to the same lessons, 'The *Legenda* give us quaint and picturesque incidents in her life.' But *legenda* is not the plural of a supposed *legendum* meaning a lesson: it is a feminine singular.

It is a relief to turn from Miss Comper to Dom Noetinger. The latter is already well-known for his French editions of the *Cloud of Unknowing* and Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, and we have learnt to expect from him careful and sound work. And he has, of course, the advantage of being a Catholic and of knowing the spiritual world in which Rolle lived. In the book before us he publishes a French version of three of Rolle's works, with useful notes. It may seem paradoxical, but we do not hesitate to say that for the ordinary person who is not a specialist in Middle English, yet can read French, this is the proper edition of Rolle. Here he is in a modern language, without the hindrances of archaic diction and perplexed syntax and constant reference to a glossary.

Apart from his version, Dom Noetinger gives us a hundred pages of Introduction, which comprises a sketch of Rolle's life and an intelligent account of his spiritual experience and spiritual teaching. We may reasonably rejoice to find that Rolle was not half-educated, or an unbalanced visionary, or even a precursor of the Reformation; but an orthodox theologian and a normal Catholic contemplative. J.M.

BLESSED CUTHBERT MAYNE. By R. A. McElroy, C.R.L. (Sands & Co.; pp. 127; 3/6 net.)

We cannot know too much of our English martyrs and, therefore, this biographical study of the protomartyr of the English