

Much has been done here to rectify the situation observed by Professor Knowles: 'Damian, at least until recent years, has probably been the object of less study and more misunderstanding than any other medieval figure of equal magnitude and significance.' (*The Monastic Order In England*, Cambridge 1940, p. 194.) Something of his magnitude and significance as a canonist is thrown into relief in these pages, where he is seen to be 'well equipped with a theory of the sources of law to make his way through the mass of canonical material in circulation and to use the collections that came to hand with a degree of security and discrimination commensurate with the science of his age'. (p. 142.)

AMBROSE FARRELL, O.P.

THE RULE OF ST AUGUSTINE. By Rev. T. A. Hand, O.S.A. (Gill; 8s. 6d.)

An admirable translation of the Rule of St Augustine and an added commentary by the Spanish Augustinian, Blessed Alphonsus Orozco, make this book doubly valuable to numerous men and women who live their religious lives under the guidance of the great doctor. It is remarkable how many of our best-known religious orders and congregations of both sexes have this rule as the basis of their constitutions; leaving aside the many canonical orders, we can instance the Servite and Dominican friars, the nuns of the Order of the Good Shepherd, the Presentation nuns and the Ursulines, and the Sisters of Mercy.

Blessed Alphonsus, the author of the commentary, was admitted to the order in Salamanca in 1522 by St Thomas of Villanova and had as his novice master Blessed Louis of Montoya, under whom he rapidly developed that gentleness of spirit that made him so renowned and fruitful a preacher and teacher during his sixty-nine years in the order. In 1882 Leo XIII raised him to the altars of the Church. His commentary here published is neither a critical examination nor an explanation of the Rule; it is quite frankly of an hortative character only, as may be gathered from examples such as the following, where he admonishes 'those religious who wander aimlessly about, going from room to room distracting their brethren from their work and prayer' (p. 26). These he reminds of our Lord's words: 'My house shall be called a house of prayer but you have made it a den of thieves.'

Consoling, however, is his teaching on prayer, where he says: 'Since many are disturbed by mental distractions especially at the time of prayer when they wish to be more attentive, and find themselves thinking of their duties, or on occasions even of useless things, it is well to remember that the attention prescribed in the Rule is not of necessity actual, for that would be too much to expect from our weakness in this life. It suffices that we should desire to be attentive at the beginning

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