

Blackfriars

larly Franciscan and contemplative quality which explains the vicissitudes of the Seraphic Order.

Father Dominic has an inspiring chapter on the missionary activities of his Order, and another on its spiritual influences and he appeals wistfully for translators so that the vast untouched Franciscan literature might be made accessible to English readers.

K.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. Authorised translation from the Third Revised and Enlarged Edition of 'Le Thomisme' by Etienne Gilson. Translated by Edward Bullough, M.A. (Heffer, Cambridge; price 8/6).

English people are not, generally speaking, attracted to the reading of scientific philosophy: the exposition of fundamental truths of reasoning has comparatively small appeal amongst a people that prides itself on being illogical. Works of this nature do not easily bloom a second time in the uncongenial atmosphere where 'thriller' weeds flourish and multiply. But when, notwithstanding that 'it is impossible not to be thrilled by Edgar Wallace,' a philosophic treatise survives the choking influence of the weeds and speedily renews its vitality in a second edition, no further proof is needed of its outstanding merit and wide appeal.

This new edition of Gilson's 'Le Thomisme' in its English rendering, based upon the latest French edition, is adorned with the addition of two important chapters: one, 'The Corporeal World and the Efficacy of Secondary Causes,' the other 'Knowledge and Truth.' Further, there are certain useful amplifications of already existing themes. But more than this, the whole translation has been carefully revised, notably in the chapters on the proofs of the existence of God where a more accurate fidelity to the original Thomist doctrine has been effected. Not least of all, the Index has been entirely re-cast and now presents (in distinction from the former one) a valuable and necessary means of reference both to themes and to proper names.

It is to be regretted that the original inaccurate title, 'The Philosophy of St. Thomas,' must now persist. A mere transliteration of the French title would have had at least the merit of accuracy. Mr. Bullough is, however, to be congratulated not merely upon his ability as a translator, but even more upon his evident care in checking the translation by continued reference to the Angelic Doctor's own statement of the teachings ascribed to him.

Those who have not yet read this work are doing an injustice to their intelligence, while those who already know the first edition will appreciate still more the increased perfection of the second.

H.C.

THE HEROIC LIFE OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL. By Henri Lavedan. Translated by Fr. Leonard, C.M. (Sheed & Ward; 7/6 net.)

Inveterate readers of penny dreadfuls or shilling shockers might find a pleasant change and no less excitement in the life of St. Vincent. Shepherd, schoolboy, university student, the prey of pirates in a stirring sea adventure, chaplain and counsellor to queens and princes, parish priest and galley slave, the founder of two religious congregations and multitudinous other good works, nocturnal collector of armfuls of foundling babies, the friend of kings and convicts, saints and robbers: what more would you have one man to be within the space of two hundred and sixty pages? And if you want horrors, there are the descriptions of the hospitals and the state of the galley-slaves to rouse a shudder.

Fifty years ago hagiographers made the saints mere dummies to be dressed up in every virtue. Their sayings and doings were all pressed into the same service, occasionally with some difficulty, but the biographer usually managed, by ascribing supernatural motives, to transform what was merely natural or even faulty into perfections. Incidents and circumstances which could not be made directly edifying were ignored, whatever light they might have thrown on the saint's life and character.

But lately a reaction has set in, and in some biographies we have almost too much of the setting and not enough of the saint; while the writer's imagination makes free in the natural, not the supernatural sphere. Such is the only fault to be found with M. Lavedan's delightful book. It is like a highly coloured cinema film: the figures live and move, but in silence. It is the saints' relations with God—of which their relations with men are but the result—that make them saints. Much of this inner life must remain a secret, but many of St. Vincent's letters are extant, and would surely help us to know him better than do long *imaginary* soliloquies. Again, while we are given details even of the dress of some quite minor character in the book, we are told nothing at all of the saint's relations with Anne of Austria, nor his great work of ecclesiastical reform on Louis XIV's 'Council of Conscience' during her regency.