

there is room for a sympathetic book on Browning, but when I come upon 'In the reading of Browning's poetry we shall have become aware that we were in the presence of a writer who, in greatness of soul, power over character, and verbal affluence is second only to Shakespeare, and who in treatment of love is second to none', I can scarcely believe my eyes. Fantastic overvaluation of this kind can do no good to Browning's reputation, or to Mr Duffin's. It isn't merely that Mr Duffin seems unaware, judging by the way Browning rubs shoulders with Milton and Wordsworth and Keats in this book, of where he stands in contemporary estimation; he seems to have no reasonable notion as to where Browning ought to stand, granted that we are now paying less attention than his poetry deserves. And I found myself struggling through the eulogy of this book ('greatness of soul'; 'primarily a thinker'; 'charming, brilliant and inspiring'; 'the man's moral equipment was superbly complete') as through treacle in a nightmare.

The biography is better than the criticism. Mrs Miller's hostile account of Browning and his wife, published four years ago, needed an answer, and Mr Duffin goes some way towards giving one.

JOHN JONES

NOTICES

THE STORY OF WALES, by Elisabeth Inglis-Jones (Faber, 15s.). Perhaps only a novelist could embark on the enterprise of telling the history of Wales, from pre-history to 1954, in 250 pages. Miss Inglis-Jones, basing herself on such sound historians as Sir J. E. Lloyd and Professor David Williams, provides a useful popular introduction to an involved record. Inevitably full of generalizations, it is yet just in its emphasis, yet we would prefer fewer sentences like 'Many and great are the changes which the Second World War brought about in the country'. And the myth of 'warm, emotional artistry' is perpetuated. More facts and fewer fancies would greatly improve a well-intended book.

SAINTS AND OURSELVES (Second Series) is a further collection of holy biographies, edited by Philip Caraman, S.J. (Hollis and Carter, 12s. 6d.). Hagiography suffers at the moment from journalists. Although Christopher Dawson writing on St Boniface or Renée Haynes writing on St Hugh of Lincoln would by themselves justify such a book, we are inclined to feel that there should be a guillotine on 'essays on saints', at least until some more substantial work is done on the critical study of their lives and times. Repeated snippets of personal admiration are easy

to read (and perhaps to write). The only essay that attempts the sort of original work we should like to see is that of D. B. Wyndham Lewis on Blessed David Lewis. It is of course also—and no doubt for that reason—the best in the book.

THE LIVES OF THE BRETHREN OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS, translated by Placid Conway, O.P. (Blackfriars Publications, 16s.) is a reprint of the edition which appeared some thirty years ago in the Orchard Series of spiritual classics. It has little of the fame, or indeed of the charm, of the parallel Franciscan *Fioretti*, but as Fr Bede Jarrett pointed out in his introduction (here reprinted), Gerard de Frachet's collection gives us an incomparable picture of the first Dominicans; it is 'an endless reminder of God's mercy and man's gratitude'. In its prolixity and love of the marvellous it faithfully reflects the mood of its time, but there emerges a wonderful record of the impact of St Dominic and Blessed Jordan, his successor as Master General, on the growing Order of Preachers. This is an essential book for all who love the Dominican Order, and it is a powerful reminder of its origins and of the fervour of those who established its work.

TWENTY-FOUR PSALMS arranged for singing (Grail Publications, 3s. 6d.), is an English version of the musical setting of French Psalms which has achieved such popular success in the last few years. It may be doubted whether this was the best way of approaching the difficult problem of making the Psalms singable for English Catholics. The melodies somehow presuppose their French originals, and an English version should surely have called on English musicians (and there are a number of young composers who could well have been asked to provide melodies within an English tradition). It is interesting to contrast this version with that prepared (and as yet unpublished) for the Psalms of Sunday Vespers by Fr Sebastian Bullough, O.P., and Anthony Milner. The native product is much more spontaneous, less boring in its melodic line and with no suspicion of 'adaptation'. It is to be hoped it may soon be generally available.

NUCLEAR WAR AND PEACE, by Professor J. E. Roberts and the Bishop of Chichester (National Peace Council, 2s. 6d.), contains a forty-page account, in clear terms, of the effects of nuclear weapons. The information is vital to every thinking person, but until recently has only been available in technical journals. In the last pages Dr Bell draws his conclusions on the moral issues, showing that while it would be wrong to use large bombs against centres of population, the use of smaller weapons against military objectives may be permissible.