

information, but amid much that is conventional there are passages of considerable interest to the historian of the penal times as well as to the general reader. There emerges from these pages a woman of character and of great courage and exceptional piety. It was an age when half-hearted Catholics sooner or later succumbed and only the valiant and the truly pious stood firm. What is so significant is the type of prayer that nourished these souls in the dark days of persecution. In spite of the secrecy of all their worship the educated Catholic layfolk were still using some form of liturgical office in Latin. One of the commonest books found in the searches of Catholic houses was *Officium Beatae Mariae*. Lady Montague was no exception:

'She did every day say three offices, that of the Blessed Virgin, of the Holy Ghost and of the Cross, whereto she added at least three rosaries, the Jesus Psalter, the fifteen prayers of St Bridget, which because they begin with O are commonly called her fifteen Oes, and the common litanies, and finally sometimes the Offices of the Dead.'

Dr Southern has modernized the spelling and provided a useful Introduction and notes, but it is doubtful whether users of the Douai Bible will need his many explanatory footnotes.

GODFREY ANSTRUTHER, O.P.

THIRTY STORIES. By Elizabeth Myers. (Macdonald; 12s. 6d.)

STRANGERS. By Antonia White. (Harvill Press; 10s. 6d.)

There could hardly be two books of short stories more dissimilar. The late Elizabeth Myers' are quick, pointed and poetic; they start usually with a bang and often finish with one. In a letter quoted in the Introduction by her husband, Littleton Powys, who has made this collection, she says, 'No one likes telling stories better than I do, just for the pleasure of telling them', and this is evident, for the chief pleasure that one derives from them oneself is the rich and personal language in which they are told. 'This is one of the stories Willy Gannister tells about that hell-tasting, wild and wasteful tough of a son of his, Rory.' Many are set in Ireland, but the Ireland of James Stephens, not of James Joyce.

Miss White, on the other hand, is subtler and more consciously craftsmanlike, her language sober and more exact, so that one is aware of what is being said rather than of the way. Her portraits of an old expatriate English governess in the witty 'Aunt Rose's Revenge' and of a terrifying would-be Carmelite in 'The Exile' emerge all the more strikingly for this reason and must be among the best of her always distinguished writing. Both books are worth reading, but perhaps by different readers.

B.W.