

A PATRON FOR NOVEMBER

THE EDITOR

THE uses of etymology are most often reserved to the scholar: the dictionary bracket and the learned footnote are its habitat. And 'patron' will be said to derive from *pater*, father, an initial meaning lost in the association of 'patronage' with its sense of remote control and condescending interest. The point may be important, for words are the ultimate currency of our human trading, and even 'heavenly patrons' may suffer from the memory of the usual sense.

In our own time, indeed within the last few years, Martin of Porres, whom the Church honours on November 5th, has emerged as a most popular patron of an extraordinary variety of causes. This Dominican lay-brother, half-caste, born into the remote world of sixteenth-century Peru, may seem an improbable patron for the world we know, but within the economy of the Church's life the saints are never simply the type of their age or colour or trade; they belong to a time, they have a name and features and a personality most certainly their own. Crispin stands for shoe-makers, and Giles for travellers, and Anthony for things that are lost; and, in the immediate sense, Martin is a providential friend for the dispossessed, for those who do not belong. His work was hidden, though he himself was known. Within a small circle, he was the friend of ruler and beggar, strong and weak, and his very colour made of him, makes of him, one uniquely qualified to stand for reconciliation.

For he is a father, this brother: the father of all who look for the healing work of Christ within the family of Christ's brethren. Every saint in his manner has achieved this work, for sanctity is nothing but the life of Christ communicated to men and women through the ages as they pass, and it might seem accident, or fashion, that throws a sudden light on one rather than on another—yesterday St James, today St Teresa of Lisieux. But there is no need to think that fashion, any more than all the moods of man, can be without its gracious meaning. For Martin, simple as he is, unlikely, may well become the agent of our need. Colour is a discernible sign of a difference, God-given and plain; the malice

Blessed Martin of Porres, O.P.

A carving at Hawkesyard Priory by Lindsey Clark, F.R.B.S.



of man has made of it a division, a sign of a broken body and of hate. Martin, who in his life was all things to every man he found, is to be known, not simply as the newest statue in the shop, but he may well be known to us, who need his understanding of the iniquity of men's divisions, and the price of their healing.

HILARY PEPLER

WITH the death of Hilary Pepler BLACKFRIARS loses on this side of eternity one of its oldest friends. It was in an early number of this review that he wrote that 'the salvation of this country waits until men see that freedom without faith is slavery, and order without charity is chaos', and the wisdom of his words is no less plain thirty years after. For he was a wise man who loved the truth and served it; and he had a right to speak of the primacy of faith and charity which for him were life itself. It may be that he gave himself to causes which seemed to fail; and his nostalgic love for an England that is gone for ever could sometimes mask the real cause of that love, which was a vigorous sense of man's dignity, at one with the pattern of all created good.

He will be remembered for much, but one last memory may serve for all. His Albert Hall production of the Passion Mime on Maundy Thursday this year was all one had grown to expect of his work: restrained and formal, the action as it advanced was the very language of divine pity, beyond words. He watched, and when it was over forestalled the coming praise. 'I hope they'll say their prayers', he said.

May he rest in peace.