

ON THE NATURE AND DIGNITY OF LOVE. By William of St Thierry.

ON JESUS AT TWELVE YEARS OLD. By St Aelred of Rievaulx.

THE SCHOOL OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

Translated from Latin by Geoffrey Webb and Adrian Walker.
(Mowbray's, Fleur de Lys series; 3s. 6d. each).

Even today there is far too little good spiritual reading available for lay people, so much at second or third remove from the sources which usually remain either untranslated or in the unreadable style of the last century. These three short works are therefore very welcome. A passage from the most important, William of St Thierry's treatise on love, will give an idea both of his quality of thought and the workmanlike translation. He is talking of the beatific vision:

'Now all living things are flooded with the brightness of the sun, and each one casts its light upon the others. As we see each other to be living, likewise in the life of beatitude, God will be seen by each in all and by all in each one of the blessed, without the Godhead being seen by the bodily eye. Rather, the glorified body will show forth the presence of God by its manifest grace. This shows the value of the sacraments in this life. We can understand hardly anything except concrete and physical things while we are passing through this world like shadows, and God binds us to him by means of the sacraments which we perceive with our senses.' (p. 58.)

The series in general is labelled 'devotional', but as a description of William's writing that is hardly adequate. He stands on equal terms as theologian with any of the great medieval doctors. He is not an easy writer, and occasional notes would have made this a more useful volume. The most readily available study of him in English is an appendix to Gilson's *St Bernard*: some reference to this might have helped.

St Aelred's charming meditation on the child Jesus is plainer sailing, though probably more difficult to put into acceptable English. This version is generally most successful, though I regret the archaic second person singulars and initial capitals to pronouns that stand for God (the Bible is surely the best guide there).

The third volume contains a selection from Cistercian writing in the first century after St Bernard. The main part of it is from the *Meditatio Piissima*, long attributed to him and certainly an authentic development of his thought. The choice is well made, and the translation again effective. All three volumes can be warmly recommended to readers of this journal.