

work of both the historian and the artist. While recognising that Lacordaire was not fully equipped to carry out the former and that present methods of research and new data have brought to light a better interpretation of the moral background of the thirteenth century, it would nevertheless be wrong to support the literary romanticism of the biography by adding meticulous erudition. Although strict investigation of the past is undoubtedly the scientific basis of history, there must be from the start a deep perception of mind to grasp the human meaning behind the facts and events. It seems then that, as it stands, with Lacordaire's own limitations and those of his time, his *Life of St Dominic* partakes of authentic history. His own illuminating preface to the first edition has very appropriately been reprinted here too.

SIMONE WYN GRIFFITH

MARY WARD 1585-1645. By Mary Oliver, I.B.V.M.; Sheed and Ward, 18s.

To know Mary Ward is to love her and to find in her, after the lapse of three centuries, one who exemplified those qualities most needed in our own time—a recollected spirit hand in hand with almost ceaseless apostolic work, far-seeing initiative combined with prudence and common sense, and, above all, that gaiety, vitality, and courage which present sanctity in its most attractive light. This astounding Englishwoman is still comparatively little known in English-speaking countries and this is partly because no full length popular biography has been available. Mother Oliver has now put us greatly in her debt by providing such a biography.

She has handled with dexterity the complex unwieldy mass of material that concerns Mary Ward's life-work, and contrived to produce a complete narrative with pace and liveliness that holds one's interest throughout. The sordid tale of ecclesiastical and secular intrigue which formed the background of Mary's labours and the major stumbling block to their success is touched on without bitterness and treated with the discretion and charity typical of Mary's own attitude to her enemies. Considerable care, too, has been taken to give a vivid and accurate picture of the practical details of the education for girls offered by Mary's Institute in her own day.

Imaginative reconstruction is a legitimate medium in this kind of biography, especially, as with Mary's childhood, where few facts are available; but it has pitfalls which Mother Oliver has not managed wholly to avoid. She has, it is true, been careful to put only words which we know to be her own into Mary's mouth, but she has not hesitated to reconstruct Mary's thoughts in a manner which some readers may find rather jarring. A disturbing note of sentimentality creeps into the more fictionalized passages and even a suggestion of that melodrama which the somewhat misleading publisher's blurb will have led the reader to expect. Yet both sentimentality and sensationalism were utterly alien to Mary Ward.

## THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

The introduction and epilogue by Maisie Ward are admirable in emphasizing the essential trust in God which was at the root of Mary Ward's spirituality, and in calling attention to the late Pope's wish that the apostolic spirit of that 'incomparable woman' should be an inspiration for our own time. The format of the book is attractive and it is pleasing to note that the most authentic of the known portraits, the Augsburg one, has been chosen for the dust jacket. It is to be hoped that in any future edition it will appear in less ephemeral form, perhaps as a frontispiece.

URSULA MURPHY

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