

proofs from Scripture, the Fathers and Reason is dead. Is it not that the references to Holy Writ and the Fathers come in St Thomas, not so much as proof-texts as loving reminiscences from an abundant and affectionate memory and are blended from a living thing? We perhaps find the key in the words used by the Holy Father in the *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, when he says of the Fathers and commentators of the past: 'By reason of the office in the Church with which God entrusted them, they excel in a delicate perception of heavenly things and in a wonderful keenness of understanding, which enable them to penetrate far into the depths of the word of God and to bring to light all that can contribute to explaining the teaching of Christ and to promoting sanctity of life'. (C.T.S. trans. n. 34.)

I should like to apply this to the discovery of Fr Leen's 'Secret'. We are always conscious when reading him that the *Summa* lies just immediately behind, even when it is not directly quoted. When he says in the present work: 'Mary is the Mother of Fear—not of servile fear, but of a fear of delight, of a fear shot through and through with trembling reverence and love. She is the Mother of that fear which is a delicate shrinking from anything that could pain or wound the object of its love'—do we not recognise a very beautiful summing up of II-II q. 19 on the Gift of Fear?

It might be said that the hope expressed by the Holy Father for the work of modern interpreters of the Sacred Scriptures: 'Thus will come about that happy and fruitful combination of the learning and spiritual unction of the ancients with the greater erudition and maturer skill of the moderns' was realised in his own sphere by Fr Leen. He knew how to found himself on St Thomas as the transmitter of the past and at the same time to gather up the rich spiritual teaching of the moderns and thus to 'bring forth new fruit'. And thus we get the teaching of St Francis de Sales and the two Teresas and withal that unconscious Irish Thing—a steady strength that has come purified through the fire of persecution, together with the innate kindliness and graciousness of the Irish soul.

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THE COMFORTING OF CHRIST—being a Peace-time Edition, revised and enlarged, of *This War is the Passion*. By Caryl Houselander. (Sheed & Ward; 8s. 6d.)

Miss Houselander is always feminine in her writing. That is her great merit. When we hear her it is as if we are at a mother's knee being told the things we need to know, simply, soothingly. She writes for adults, so that the things she says are no children's things; but the telling of them has that quality. And it is a quality we so badly need. Too many of us have had no Catholic mother; we are converts, or children of broken families, or our mother has been more worldly than Catholic; and anyway all of us are somehow orphaned by the strain and cruelty and unsympathy of a war-racked world.

Not that there is anything condescending in Miss Houselander's

approach. Only that she is a woman, and writes, richly, as a woman. It is not particularly learned; it is anything but systematic. But it is understanding, and gentle; and there are those homely flashes, the soul-proud woman like the house-proud woman, the wrong way to heaven like the way to Berlin in a pre-war train plastered with 'Verboten' notices. The value of her book is not so much in any doctrinal teaching as in the attitude it conveys. Caryll Houselander is utterly at home in her Father's House—and what does any mother teach us but to grow up at ease in the household and traditions of our fathers?

We are here to comfort Christ, to fill up, in St Paul's phrase, what is wanting of his sufferings; and to find our joy and integration with all men in that universal comforting. Miss Houselander is at her best when she writes of suffering; the war has evidently forced her to revise whatever romantic illusions she may have had about it; one passage alone is enough to earn our gratitude: 'It is never easy to meditate on the Passion; the more we know of real sorrow and real pain . . . the more difficult it becomes to think about the pain and sorrow of Christ. . . . We can no longer bear to have beautiful thoughts about the suffering Christ. The mind becomes bleak, we begin to suffer with him'.

The book is made up of bits and pieces, a book for meditation. First Miss Houselander sets us at home with Christ in the realness of his mystical body; then she describes three defences (perhaps a not too happy word) of the mind against the unhappiness of the world today—prayer, appreciation of suffering, surrender of our fears. The section on prayer is a little disappointing—we are told too little; but on suffering and on fear we do not need to be told anything but only to have sympathy, which is where Miss Houselander excels. A short section follows on our Lady's mind, her constant care for her children. Then we return to suffering, now in the context of reparation when I 'feel the weariness of the man beside me aching in my bones'; and finally a word on the Risen Christ which solves suffering in joy that will not wait for the end of suffering but already breaks in on it and suffuses it with ineffable radiance. COLUMBA RYAN, O.P.

THE PRIEST AMONG THE SOLDIERS. Edited by Martin Dempsey. (Burns Oates; 10s. 6d.)

An introduction by Mgr John Coghlan and eighteen chapters in the form of graphic sketches of personal experience show us the priest on active service in a world at war. At the front, in the base, as a prisoner, on a hospital ship, whatever the circumstances, however strange the conditions (so much had to be improvised), the chaplain was first of all a *priest*: Mass and Sacraments mattered most. War conditions modified ways and means, but not essentials. And here and there remarks which every priest working in England might well ponder: e.g. 'Many of the younger men, products of post-1918 paganism, knew nothing of religion, and many of them considered it a nuisance' (p. 120); or 'How much work was waiting