

FATHER THURSTON. By Joseph Crehan, S.J. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

Father Joseph Crehan has enshrined the memory of a truly remarkable life in a model memoir. A glimpse of the amazing character of that life appears in the words written by Father Thurston in an unfinished article just before his death: 'I have been a reader in the library of the British Museum for nearly sixty years. My ticket of admission is dated November 18th, 1880. . . . I am not proposing here to review the many thousands of hours I have spent under the great dome of the Reading Room. For some decades of my life I spent there most of my working hours during six days of every week.' Those who have done even a little research will realise the immensity of the toil, patience and industry of those hours and days and years—the time sometimes taken to verify a reference; a footnote sometimes the only thing to show for the labour of days. The thirty-two pages of Bibliography are an eloquent epitaph to the dedicated life of a scholar who toiled to the end of his eighty-third year.

Sometimes one would have wished Fr Crehan's narrative to have been less concise. For example, the outsider would have liked a description of the peculiar Stonyhurst cricket instead of being referred to Fr Thurston's article on the subject in an ancient issue of *The Times*.

Fr Crehan suggests that the papal tradition identifying St Dominic with the Rosary had been modified in Pope Pius XI's *Ingravescentibus* as the result of Fr Thurston's researches. This would seem to be questionable, for if (to quote Fr Thurston—p. 109) 'before Alan de Rupe there is not a shadow of evidence to identify the Dominicans in any way with the Rosary', the only reasonable modification would be to drop St Dominic's name altogether. St Dominic could not 'forward so wonderfully' a method of prayer unless he knew of it.

It is not correct to say Fr Vincent McNabb attacked the devotion of the Nine Fridays. He was concerned about interpretations put upon the Twelfth Promise and questioned whether a promise made in a private revelation could add anything to the promises connected with the Eucharist contained in the revelation of the Gospel. He was dealing with a theological point which cannot be decided by a majority vote.

The immense range of Fr Thurston's labours, his prodigious erudition, his intellectual honesty, were combined with a living interest in real people and things and a power of expression, lucid and forcible, which made him something of a phenomenon. As a champion in the Catholic cause he has never been replaced.