

THE SPLENDOUR OF THE ROSARY. By Maisie Ward. With Prayers by Caryl Houselander and Pictures by Fra Angelico. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

This volume is well titled. Of course its framework and design are not new, having been anticipated, even in detail, in the admirable volume by Fr John Leather, O.P., entitled *The Rosary: Its Power and Use. Illustrated by the Works of Fra Angelico*, which was published by Sands in 1932. In this latter work, indeed, the pictures were better reproduced and possibly better chosen in three of the four instances where there is diversity. In both is to be found a section on the life and work of Angelico and in both each Mystery is introduced by a description of the appropriate picture. The likeness is further emphasised by the use of a short prayer in verse to accompany each Mystery, together with pertinent passages of Holy Scripture. It is no doubt unfortunate that Fr Leather's important and valuable Rosary book was not amongst those kindly lent by Fr Skehan, O.P. to the authoress of this latest work on the subject. But it is not, by any means, meant to imply that there is nothing new or nothing of value in her own contribution. On the contrary, with the help of Ruskin and other authorities she adds notably to our appreciation of Fra Angelico's inspiration and genius, and the happily chosen extracts in verse and prose which adorn her essays on each several Mystery do verily show forth the splendour of the Rosary. Moreover the prayer-poems by Caryl Houselander are profound in thought, exquisite in form, and of a delicate poignancy (to borrow a phrase of G. K. Chesterton's).

But because the plan of the two books is the same, it is inevitable that a comparison should be drawn; moreover the differences that emerge from such a comparison are not without significance. Thus Maisie Ward delves into the vexed question of the Dominican origin of the Rosary and leans to a negative answer, whereas Fr Leather is content to quote the Encyclical of Pope Benedict XV which seems to favour an affirmative answer. Again, in her short section on the 'Theological Background of the Rosary', she offers a number of valuable and important definitions anent the nature of man and his relations with God (though not everyone will agree to accept without comment, as she does, Père de la Taille's thesis of the Last Supper and Calvary). Fr Leather, on his side, is content with a simpler and even briefer section on 'The Rosary and the Blessed Sacrament'. In fine it would probably be accurate to conclude that, while Fr Leather composed his book as a practical aid to a fruitful use of the Rosary for the generality of Catholics, the work under review is rather a thoughtful and even scholarly introduction to the profounder significance of the Rosary for the more learned amongst them.

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