

of convention was the talk of Italian society, seemed an improbable subject for the third veil, that of a nun. And this is where Alessandra's biography takes its unusual and unexpected turn. She came back to God and received an imperative call to the Carmelite life. She arranged for the education of her sons, disposed of her affairs and gave up the world. For twenty years she gave her life to God in prayer, in austerity, in suffering. At last, on January 2nd, 1931, Alessandra, now Mother Mary of Jesus, left this world for ever. 'Lord God, we are home' she whispered as she died. It was an arduous journey and it is described for us by Miss Lucy Prario with skill and sympathetic perception. Miss Prario is fortunate in her translator, Mr George Lamb.

KIERAN MULVEY, O.P.

SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM AND CHRISTIAN THOUGHT. By D. Dubarle, O.P. (Blackfriars; 10s. 6d.)

This is a collection of five articles first published in France a few years ago. They deal with the problem raised for Christians by technical advances such as automation in the contemporary world. Cybernetics is given clear treatment in the second article, which also has an interesting account of the theory of games and its possible applications. The remaining articles are rather short and vague over the complex question of how these new techniques will affect our civilization. Work of an occasional nature by a distinguished author is often worth collecting together; it is less often worth the trouble of translating. Too little discrimination is being shown in giving books the permanence of English paper, print, covers and well-designed jacket. We risk being swamped by a flood of books which were never intended to have them.

LAURENCE BRIGHT, O.P.

THE WAY IT WORKED OUT. By G. B. Stern. (Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.)

This book is a sequel to Miss Stern's story of her conversion, *All in Good Time*, and is described by her publishers as 'an eminent convert's most honest account . . . of what the faith did for her, and what it didn't do'. It is a lighthearted account and consists of a series of musings that produce the cumulative effect of a breathless, and rather pious, monologue. It is thus a patchy book and I found the most entertaining patches to be the stories about little-known saints. For the rest, some recent converts may find it of interest as revealing a community of bewilderment about some Catholic practices; Catholics of longer standing may find interest in the occasional fresh view of such customs.

It would seem, incidentally, to have worked out very well for Miss

Stern in at least one particular, for 'my age', she writes, 'cuts me off automatically from most of the mortal sins'. 'Automatically' and 'most' seem to beg the question.

M.T.

FRANCESCO: A LEGEND. By August Mahr. (Vantage Press, New York; \$3.50.)

This is a caricature of St Francis. The hysterical atmosphere of this book is far removed from the world of the 'Fioretti'. We have here a Hollywood St Francis. We do not know whether or not the author is a Catholic; some of the sentiments he ascribes to Francesco make one suspect that he is not, as also do the opinions voiced by the various ecclesiastics who appear in the story. This surmise is strengthened by the use of the expression 'the sacrament' (with a small 's'; p. 486), and by the naturalistic interpretation of various well-known events in the life of St Francis. Francesco, of course, is supposed to be St Francis of Assisi. The work is one of those semi-fictional productions based on the life of some saint of which several have appeared in recent years. We wonder if the publishers have any sense of humour. They solemnly inform us on the dust-cover that the author's 'publications range from *The Origin of the Greek Tragic Form* (1938) to *The Anatomical Terminology of the Eighteenth-Century Delaware Indians* (1956)'. One wondered whether this would qualify him to write about St Francis; now that one has read the work one knows that it does not.

There are a number of minor errors which confirm one's suspicions that the writer is not at home with his subject. We always understood that a secular priest in Italy is referred to as 'Don', not, as is done here whenever the incumbent of San Damiano is mentioned, as 'Dom'. Some of the place-names are spelt in a way we have not met before, e.g. 'Alverno'; we are accustomed to 'Alverna'. Would a priest expose the Blessed Sacrament all night at the mere request of a layman, even supposing, which we doubt, that exposition was practised in the thirteenth century? Was anybody in those days as keen on bathing as Francesco is made out to be? The conversations are stilted, unnatural, and sententious, couched in language which is a mixture of Victorianism and American slang. We regret that we cannot recommend this book.

FR SEBASTIAN, O.F.M.CAP.