

French Carmelite lay-brother whose now well-known spiritual way was of simple abandonment to God's will, the continual seeking of God in everything, the doing of little things out of great love for God. However there is behind it a great depth, as may be seen from the balance of elements in his piety: . . . 'the whole substance of religion was faith, hope and charity'. . . (4th Conversation); 'We must know before we can love' (9th Letter), yet 'the acts of the understanding were comparatively of little value, and the acts of the will all' (2nd Conversation). In his life we find this same kind of balance. He was absolutely sure of his spiritual path and said he needed no director (2nd Conversation), yet he humbly begs the opinion of a correspondent as to whether he is being deluded (2nd Letter). He acknowledges his feelings of sensible devotion, yet knows it is wrong to be taken up with them (4th Letter).

Where Brother Lawrence was, we feel, deliberately withdrawn, Saint Francis was filled with a burning apostolic love. He did great things out of great love for God, and there is a fierce intensity about most of the *Fioretti* which is brought out by its being adjoined to the more restrained *Practice*. One wishes that the editor in his brief introduction had not left us with the impression that Saint Francis died as a disillusioned crusader: 'Dissensions . . . provoked by the desire of many for a relaxation of the stern rule made Francis retire from the active direction (of his Order), heart-broken, blind, ill. He died in 1226.' This is just a fraction of the story. Sabatier's remarks about the *Fioretti* depicting 'the soul and the heart' (and not the words and deeds) of the early Franciscans need much explanation.

Grateful as we must be for non-Catholic interest in Saint Francis, a great disservice would be done to him if this were to lead an incautious reader into thinking that some undogmatic spiritual doctrine is to be found in its pages (and, for that matter, in the pages of Brother Lawrence) and that all the rest is superfluous.

E.B.

THEY SPEAK BY SILENCES. By a Carthusian. Translated from the French by a Monk of Parkminster. (Longmans, Green; 7s. 6d.)

'What enchants me in these pages and constitutes their perfection is that they . . . awaken those deeper regions of the soul where God dwells, by which the soul can be united to him. But they contact them in the only way in which they can do (so): by touches. . . . These are what one may call "distant scenes": the overtones of a picture; and we need them. We intuitively know that reality is greater than ourselves, and that no words of ours can ever adequately express that reality. . . . Anyone who thinks he understands it fully is lessening both it and us. Anyone, on the other hand, who has caught some glimpse of

its mystery and helps us to share that vision, makes us, along with himself, greater.' (p. 7.) This quotation describes well the book itself and indicates what may be found in it. Well written, well translated, well produced, the slender volume is sure to prove attractive and helpful. Yet it was not written for a public which owes this treasure of wisdom to a providential accident. The spiritual riches of a Carthusian might have remained for ever hidden from us as his name and the rest of his activity on earth. Fortunately we were not to be deprived of the Gospel-like simplicity and depth of these lines: 'Try more and more to turn your mind away from sad thoughts. Sadness, in principle, cannot come from God, for he is joy. And even when he permits these times of trial, it is that we may find his joy through the trial. His own great joy is to give himself, for he is Love. And we should enter into that joy. *'Intra in gaudium Domini tui . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'* We enter into it by believing in his love whilst faith makes a contact with him, and enables him to give himself. Our joy is to believe that we are loved by someone who is Infinite Love. *'In caritate perpetua dilexi te, et ideo attraxi te. . . . I have loved thee with with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee.'* We feel strongly drawn to God because of his great love for us. How sad it is that this reality, which is the only true and ultimate reality, is not more familiar to us, more intimately real. It would infuse joy into even the most painful trials and bring peace and contentment to those deep parts of the soul where, in the hours of its great anguish, we would find a place of shelter and repose. We are sons of joy, because we are children of God.' (p. 98.) This is just one of the many passages which makes one echo the words of appreciation of this book's first reviewer (*La Vie Spirituelle*, October 1950): '. . . his book is one that deserves to be loved'.

C.V.

INWARD PEACE. By Raoul Plus, s.j. Tr. by Helen Ramsbotham. (Burns and Oates; 10s. 6d.)

This book, very well translated, takes its place worthily with others by the same author, a practical spiritual book of sound judgment and mature experience. Père Plus allows his needle of inward peace to pierce and pattern into many everyday pieces of material. We pass from the source of peace, which is the possession of Jesus, to threats to peace, and from there to the value of silence and solid reasons for increasing our faith, strengthening our hope and pouring life into everything within the scope of our love. The subjects about which we know so much in the abstract become concrete, possible, even desirable. Resignation and acceptance must not become passive, words used without the impulse of heat or fire. Expressions from the souls of those who have