

OLIVER. By Rev. H. Gaffey, O.P. (Gill; 3s. 6d.)

This is a short life of Blessed Oliver Plunkett, the martyred Archbishop of Armagh. At first sight one is put off! The paper 'jacket' is truly terrible—part Roman purple, part black, with line drawings in white of a gallows, a bit of chain, a ship, a palm and a sprig of shamrock, ranged presumably as decorations round a medallion head of the Martyr. The portrait alone in its medallion on a plain background would have been more effective. The black-and-white illustrations in the book are good, though more than one little drawing of the same gallows seems unnecessary! The two coloured illustrations are poor.

The story itself is well told in straightforward, simple English. Especially good is the account of Oliver's return from the security of his life in Rome to the dangers and hardships of Ireland in those years of persecution. We have, too, a graphic description of his indefatigable work for souls, as Archbishop of Armagh, undertaken at the constant risk of his own life. The account of his capture, imprisonment and trial, and finally of his death at Tyburn, is all the more moving for being so briefly and simply written.

We read on the flyleaf that the book was written for boys and girls; yet it is not a 'child's book'. Rather is it a book for every age, and many will learn from its pages of a holy and heroic Martyr for the Faith, who had been but a name to them before.

FFLORENS ROCH

MOTHER F. A. FORBES. By G. L. Sheil. (Longmans; 8s. 6d.)

This is the life of a nun who entered a teaching order—the Society of the Sacred Heart—at the age of thirty-one. Except for the first chapters and the closing one, the book consists mainly of letters written by Mother Forbes herself to a friend. Through these letters we learn not only about her active and literary work, which had to be set aside during periods of painful and wearying illness, but we get to know the woman herself, her selflessness, her courage, her kindness, her whimsical humour that no suffering could altogether suppress. We have too in these letters little gems of descriptive writing. In a few words we are shown little bits of garden; budding trees; her bird friends; and that glimpse of the sea from her window that gave her such joy when she was ill at the Brighton convent. From Craiglockhart, where the Sacred Heart nuns have their Training College for teachers, she writes of the Craig, the hill close behind the house, clothed in springtime with masses of yellow flowering 'whins' (called 'gorse' by the unmusical English); of the sun shining upon it, 'and the whole garden flooded with the apricoty, aromatic smell of it'. Sometimes she uses the outdoor things to show a spiritual truth: 'How good God is', she writes. 'Did you ever detach a limpet from a rock? I did once. . . . The limpet became a shell—to hold Holy Water'.

Mother Forbes was an enthusiastic Highlander. During her years

at Craiglockhart she founded a Scottish Association in the College. She counted among her friends students of Scottish history and tradition, Hebridean singers, Highland pipers, many of whom had probably never entered a convent before in their lives. They found a sympathetic listener in this Catholic nun, and one with real knowledge too, though she was so humble about it. She would sometimes enlist their help for her Scottish meetings, and they gave it gladly. Piper McIan offered to come and pipe 'whenever Mother Forbes would like him to'.

What was the secret of her charm, felt by all who came in contact with her? Was it perhaps her holiness? One cannot read her letters without becoming aware of the utter humility of a great soul, nor of the longing that filled her whole being, increasing as the years went on, the longing for God, and for union with him.

This is a book to read, and then to read again.

FFLORENS ROCH

QUAKER PROFILES. By Sir George Newman. (Bannisdale Press; 7s. 6d.)

This little book is a collection of essays, mainly written for the Friends' Quarterly Review. The characters and careers of six eminent Quakers are sketched: of George Fox, the founder, Thomas Hodgkin, the historian of the Anglo-Saxons, Joshua Rowntree, public figure of the 1880's, Rendel Harris, paleographer of Cambridge and Leiden, Elizabeth Newman, poetess of the '80's and '90's, and of Joseph Rowntree, who in his cocoa works at York realised his projects of caring for the conditions of his workers.

But it is the essay on the 'Cardinal tenets of Quakerism' which informs the book as a whole and helps us to understand the principles of the Society of Friends and the lives of its members. Sir George Newman suggests the main tenets as four: the principle of the Inward Light, the reliance upon Spiritual Experience, Non-institutional and Non-ritual organization, and a Way of Life which avoids 'form and fashion' and devotes itself to the needs of others.

One is perplexed at first by the disconcerting goodness of these men and women. Their devotion to the cardinal virtues was unremitting, and they themselves were convinced of the fundamental goodness of others. For the Inward Light is in every man, and the only true baptism is that of spiritual experience. The Society is at once vocational and semi-hereditary. Membership is, as it were, of disposition. A little band for whom 'experience, and not some intellectual assent is our reliance, our strong tower', scarcely could include scoundrels. It is the fact that they are self-confessedly a select people, in spite of their insistence on the catholicity of the Inward Light, that explains the consistency of their good works and their reputation.

These are, then, studies in Pelagian sanctity. Redemption is at hand for every man who will recognise and trust in the Inward Light,