

THE GRACES OF INTERIOR PRAYER. FATHER POULAIN, S. J.

It would be easy, and was tempting, to dismiss Father Poulain and his 650 pages with a jest—I have done harder things—for the mountains of his prejudice are difficult to approach across the abyss of his ignorance.

For example, he devotes just a paragraph to "Yogis." These persons he describes as "Hindu Buddhists" who are "Pantheists," and endeavour to produce "a state of stupefaction" in "their mental powers which are very low" and a "comatose condition" of their body, whose joints they dislocate. How well this describes such people as the Buddha and the author of the Bhagavadgita!

What a ring fence is Romanism against not merely truth but information! We then examine Father Poulain on the scientific side. How does levitation of the Saints take place?

"The simplest explanation, and that most in conformity with the order of Providence, consists in saying: Since the angels have power to move corporeal bodies, God makes use of their ministry, so as to avoid intervening Himself without necessity."

(This is not the translator's blundering, though perhaps much more may be hoped from a lady who says that "Socrates remained for twenty-four hours lost in thought in the camp that Potidaea was besieging." It was Potidaea's way of doing her back hair that made her so generally admired.)

No; this is the real Poulain, 50 per cent. above proof.

I am sorry for this hobble-skirted Atalanta. He must not study mystic facts; all he is allowed to do is to arrange, invent, delete as may suit dogma. He is obliged to accept the nymphomaniac nun Gertrude, and treat her blasphemous maunderings with reverence, or as-

cribe some peculiarly foul outburst to an "early temptation." He must accept every orthodox levitation, and explain it by weight-lifting competitions among the angels; he must deny every heterodox levitation, or explain it by demonic power. And as one's bitterest enemies are always one's nearest relations, so his bitterest polemics are against the Quietists who are absolutely indistinguishable from the orthodox, and in favour at Rome until the intrigues of the beasts of blood of the Society of Jesus destroyed Molinos. Father Poulain even repeats the Catholic Truths about Molinos's confession. But Father Poulain is a Jesuit.

At this stage a reviewer wants to get up and stamp such people into pulp. But the hour is not yet, though Ferrer's blood adds its cry to that of his fellow-martyrs. Rather let us consider the good points in Father Poulain's poultice.

He understand the mysticism of his own system fairly well, and his book forms a most useful document in comparative Occultism.

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