

JOURNEY TO LOURDES. By Alexis Carrel. (Hamish Hamilton; 5s.)

In a Cambridge lecture room in 1939 a don from the psychological laboratory expressed the opinion that the cures at Lourdes were 'hysterical'—the same opinion to which Dr Carrel held before he went there. Perhaps there was more excuse for such an opinion, baldly stated, in 1903. At any rate Carrel went to Lourdes to confirm his opinion; but instead he saw a girl whom he diagnosed as being at the point of death from tubercular peritonitis, cured. This book is the dramatised story of the event as Dr Carrel wrote it down, on his return from Lourdes; the MS was found amongst other unpublished manuscripts. It is well written and the impact of the miracle on his sceptical mind is well conveyed. Yet for all its virtues, this little book shows the sterility of the agnostic approach; the cure led to a very emotional few minutes and to a determination to investigate further, more scientifically, a determination to be sceptical about the dogmas of scientists as well of theologians. It did not lead to faith in Jesus Christ. The story, with its conclusion of apparent belief, seems to have remained suspect to Carrel himself, since he never published it. The preface by Charles Lindbergh does not clarify matters. Of about 20,000 words the book is expensive at 5s.

J.M.T.

A SAINT IN HYDE PARK. By E. A. Siderman. (Geoffrey Bles; 7s. 6d.)

Three years ago (1947) Mr Siderman published a book entitled *With Father Vincent at Marble Arch*, which was sponsored by Blackfriars Publications, approved by the Archbishop of Birmingham and had all the appearances of having been vetted by those who were in a position to know more about the subject than even Fr Vincent's most assiduous heckler. In the new book all these recommendations are conspicuously lacking. The author has launched out on his own: he advertised for material in the press as if he were assuming the office of an accredited official biographer and in the process he has spoiled a good thing. He has searched high and low for more facts and anecdotes to pad out his book and has added statements which are obviously apocryphal, e.g. neither Mr Siderman nor anyone else ever heard Father Vincent ask: 'Why, when water has been in the world for thousands of years have you not washed your neck?' (p.105). It is one of those 'chestnuts' that were going the rounds before Father McNabb was born. The value of the original book was its spontaneity and a certain simple sincerity: the writer was obviously recording what he had seen and heard. By drawing upon other witnesses indiscriminately he abdicates the position of the perfect Boswell that Mr Sheed gives him in his Introduction.

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