

simple that a child will respond to the sweet music of its verse and the deep truth the verse conveys. . . . The verses we read and meditate here come to refresh our devotion: in them we find sacred scripture as their source and fount; in them too we find an authentic quality springing from a mind and heart that gives us the fruit of contemplation'. Each Mystery is given a single stanza, packed with ideas, in a style that suggests the artless quality of Fr Tabb or Michael Field in *Mystic Trees* and *Poems of Devotion*.

The publishers and printers have gone to great pains to give an exquisite setting to these poems in hand-set type on hand-made paper. The result is a superb piece of book-production of pre-war quality. B. D.

THE SEVEN DEADLY VIRTUES. Bernard Basset, S.J. (Douglas Organ; 6s.)

You'll appreciate the significance of this provocative title when you've read about Mrs Whelan, with her beans for the servants' breakfast—'Heavens! what appetites they brought from Ireland'—nice American things for her own (that would make six packets locked up in the cupboard on the stairs, thank God!), her cigarettes from under the counter (the Wood girls were both in the Altar Society), and her leather-bound prayer-book much in evidence in the top, front seat in church. And you'll see the point of it again in the holiday at Torquay—'to get away from everything we had brought everything with us'—though it's the delicious humour of the situation that sticks out here.

This book of short stories should sell like hot cakes. Father Basset has a gimlet eye for the fads and frailties of human nature, and he serves them up with a nice sprinkling of wit and wisdom. All his characters are alive: we have met the dear old Canon, the charming, overwhelming Marjorie, tiresome Mr Brice ('Funny life, isn't it?'), poor Major Wilcock, and lovable Mrs Ponsonby; not forgetting, of course, our old misguided friend, Mrs Whelan. But perhaps 'Our Liturgical Parish' is the pick of the boiling. We seem to recognise Mrs O'Brien, young Atkinson, and Mrs Draycott-Wilson. Thank heavens, though, the Canon knew all the answers—as usual.

So does Father Basset. And let's hope he goes on with his glorious 'debunking'. It's good entertainment—especially for those 'in the know'. E. E.

ABOUT JESUS. By C. J. Woollen. (Sands; 6s.)

A new book for Catholic children is always welcome, and Mr Woollen's book, *About Jesus*, will be especially acceptable to teachers of juniors and infants. Many children may enjoy reading the book for themselves but one feels that the rather small print and long paragraphs may put them off. Young people are much affected by the mere look of a book and for this reason many would have

rejoiced to see all this excellent matter presented in more attractive form. The illustrations are frankly disappointing. Surely some Catholic artist could have been found who would have considered it a privilege to illustrate a book about Jesus. The pictures here, too few for a children's book, are really not convincing; in fact they savour of fairy tales and cannot be said to illustrate the book. S. M. A.

VENGEANCE IS DEAR. By Henry Brinton. (C. and J. Temple Ltd, 50-52 Old Brompton Road, London, S.W.7; 6s.)

'We shall have peace when we are willing to pay the price of peace: the regulation of the affairs of nations by the same high codes which we aspire to employ in our daily dealings with each other.' The solution is familiar, as are the grounds on which it is based. Perhaps if they are repeated often enough, someone may perceive the obvious. E. Q.

CATHERINE, SAINT OF SIENA. By M. de la Bedoyere. (Hollis and Carter; 12s. 6d.)

This book is most curious, skilful—and readable. The author tells the story of 'a woman with a queer and highly individual temperament' who also happened to be a great saint. Whether or not such a selective approach is a dislocating distortion or not, remains to be judged.

In the perennial market place, a sounding board has been erected and trained upon Catherine, and the air is filled with the competitive clamour of rival biographers, the clangour of 14th century Sieneese arms, and rather shrilly relayed above it all, come the incisive, not to say acid, comments of Catherine.

There are, of course, difficulties in the adjustment between a 20th century editor and a 14th century woman mystic—in politics—but Mr de la Bedoyère sets about it with engaging buoyancy; with something of a gamin cheerfulness and cheek; and something of a Jack the Giantkiller stabbing at 'legends' or weaving his way through the wiles of adulatory biographers.

That bright, almost breezy touch, however, that harsh 20th century searchlight is curiously—only to some tastes, no doubt—unvital; Catherine is 'a bundle of excited energy', an activist, an extrovert, 'specially endowed with the gift of "contacting" the Unseen'!

Richly documented with the saint's lively letters is this odd scenario, we hear of visions and penances, and there are here terrific key letters to her spiritual state, but the impression left is of a spiritually galvanised mystery woman.

It is not, however, artistically possible to separate Catherine the saint, so objectively glorious and intelligible, from Catherine the praying politician. This book is, indeed, loving, loyal and lively; but it remains a brilliant freak.

MARY JACKSON.