

'But what is there mysterious about marriage?' It is not an uncommon attitude. Lip-service is paid to the sacramental nature of marriage, some care is taken to observe the canon law regulating it, and a not inconsiderable amount of literature is produced and read on the *problem* of married life; but the *mystery* remains not only elusive in its nature, but little recognised as a fact. The great value of Père Carré's book is that it boldly accepts the mystery from the beginning and indicates how the more familiar features of marriage spring from that.

The natural law on marriage is firm and clear, but the consequence of elaborating first the conditions of the natural institution and then adding—usually with a 'but'—the hackneyed phrase, 'Our Lord has elevated it to the dignity of a sacrament', is to create an impression that God has very surprisingly attached an outpouring of grace to a concession to human weakness. How much better to begin with the historical fact—for there never was a state of pure nature—of 'the wound in man's side from which God has made woman; and the suffering in his heart, in his senses, and in some sort in his soul, until God's image has been made integral!' (Incidentally, how much light is there thrown on the sacrifice and the value of chastity: the wound remains, but the pain is assuaged by the Creator of womanly tenderness.)

The responsibility of this grace-aided choice, the nature of the self-giving and its fundamental dependence on the Trinity—source and exemplar of all self-giving—the burdens and the-mutual growth, the mutual savouring of God's gifts and the enrichment of life—natural and supernatural—by the communication between children and parents, all these aspects of marriage are delicately handled and with great dignity. Throughout the book the permanence of the married state is stressed; it is this fact, that it is a way of life—of a *whole* life—and thus a vocation, belonging to that part of the divine scheme that we cannot but consider the highest, which gives to matrimony its balance and which far more than the merely physical aspect prevents fretfulness, worry, 'nerves', and worse disorders. Most important of all, the necessity of heroism is frankly stated: for sanctity is nothing if not heroic and marriage is a way to sanctity, as this little book amply and nobly demonstrates.

EDWARD QUINCY.

ANY SAINT TO ANY NUN. Letters selected and arranged by a Benedictine of Stanbrook. (Burns Oates; 8s. 6d.)

This beautifully printed book contains extracts from the writings of various saints, addressed to women consecrated to God. There are thirty-six sections, and their writers vary from St Athanasius to St Teresa of Lisieux and from Blessed Henry Suso to St Francis of Sales. There is something for every stage of the religious life, from the first wonderings about a vocation to the preparation for death.

And how practical they are. St Alphonsus, commenting on the possessive attachment certain people have for a particular confessor or director, writes: 'Tell me, to sanctify yourself is Father N. or is God necessary to you?'

The wisdom of the saints stands out so clearly from these pages, and their prudence and charity. Here are models for those who aspire to be directors of souls; and advice that is suitable for all who want to love God more—men and women, religious and lay-people. Particularly we hope that this book may be bought for every convent library so that it may encourage those who read it to go to the writings of the saints and learn direct from them. There is the wisdom of the Church enshrined.

B. D. B.

*SAINTS BEYOND THE WHITE CLIFFS.* By Margaret Gibbs. (Hollis and Carter; 10s. 6d.)

A perfect book for children of any age, and for grown-ups too. Each of these thirteen 'stories of the English saints' grips one. The illustrations are good, the print is good, and above all the writing is good; simple, alive, direct.

We have first of all St George, Patron of England. All that most English children can tell one about St George is that 'he-was-born-at-Cappadocia-of-Christian-parents' (all in one breath) and that 'he killed a dragon and rescued a beautiful lady'. This book gives us quite shortly the life of the real St George. The legends which grew about him after his death are mentioned in another section. The children who have this book will know St George as the soldier saint who was brave enough to suffer and to die rather than give up his faith.

Margaret Gibbs does not make her saints talk in a would-be mediæval English, which has too often bored children of past generations. The people in this book speak in the way that is used and understood by children. That in itself brings the saints nearer to them; they can be friends with people who speak their own language. Then the narrative is interesting. It is not told as a series of events or 'wonders'. Each of these little 'lives' reads as a consecutive story, lacking neither adventure nor thrill. But above all, their charm lies in the way the author has somehow conveyed a sense of holiness in each saint. This is sometimes lacking in the modern lives of saints written for children. There is the story of the young peasant, St Godric, who became a pedlar and made money, and later became a sailor and made more money. Later still he took to travelling far distances on foot as a pilgrim. But he could never settle. It always seemed that 'he must go—where, he could not tell. He must do—what he did not know. Only he knew that the rest of his life must be for God alone'. Just a few words, but it needs no more to sow a seed.

Then there is St Frideswide. She knows when quite young what she must do. Her mother tells her not to be silly. So Frideswide gives