

Blackfriars

progression, *from generation to generation*. . . . From these spring families that are nominally Catholic, and those distressing Protestant families bearing surnames which for generations had been associated with Catholic Ireland or Catholic Lancashire.'

A.F.

THE SEVEN NICHES. By Egerton Clarke. (London: Cecil Palmer; 2/6.)

Mr. Egerton Clarke is a Catholic poet whose earlier volumes have won praise and popularity. In *The Seven Niches* he breaks new ground and offers a long poem in the form of a Catholic legend. The idea has the charm of originality and the flavour of experiment: both are justified. He has succeeded in a difficult task. A long poem such as this will tax any poet's sincerity and prove whether he is capable of sustaining his inspiration to the end. Even the physical strain of producing a long poem defeats many a writer. It demands vision, uniformity of mood, consistent style, and balanced expression. A standard tone must be maintained, together with a definite level of inspiration. Atmosphere must be created and upheld. Facility of expression, obvious clichés, commonplace rhymes may creep into a purely narrative poem, where the story is the first thing that matters. Tennyson and Masefield are examples of such almost inevitable lapses. But *The Seven Niches* is more like a richly embroidered tapestry than an unadorned tale. Every detail is complete in colour and execution; every tiny piece will bear close inspection. That is the author's triumph. He has weighed every word, re-cast every phrase. He has considered every image, every metaphor before giving his final sanction. Therefore the poem has emerged clear-cut, glistening, chaste as a masterpiece in stained glass.

Because the poem was not easy to write it is not easy to read. It does not carry the reader along with easy rhyme and dancing rhythm. For its understanding there must be concentration—even a mood of spiritual sympathy, almost of devotion.

E.E.

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS. By Alban Butler. A new edition, corrected, amplified and edited by Herbert Thurston, S.J., and Donald Attwater. Vol. vii, July. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1932; 7/6.)

This new edition of Butler's incomparable work so valiantly and ably undertaken by Father Thurston, has already on the appearance of previous volumes called forth the admiration and

applause of BLACKFRIARS. The preface to July, however, brings a note of pain with the announcement that the multiplicity of his occupations causes the venerable editor to leave in other hands the continuance of this compilation. Mr. Attwater indeed promises in his foreword to follow the general lines his revered predecessor has indicated, and one may therefore confidently look forward to the work becoming as popular as the original, especially if a cheaper and more portable edition is subsequently issued. Certainly the references to fuller sources of information at the end of each biographical sketch are beyond all praise and this addition alone would suffice to make the work a necessity in every Catholic library. On their first appearance nearly a century ago our forefathers so welcomed these *Lives of the Saints* that there was scarcely a Catholic family in the land who did not possess them in the larger or smaller editions, nor did the books themselves lack the familiar marks of diligent and constant perusal. The good effect on the rising generation must have been incalculable and we look for a hardly less gratifying result now that they are coming to us again in a modernised garb. Where there is so much to praise it may not be invidious to signal for correction in the future cheap popular edition we so confidently anticipate, a few blemishes due apparently to hasty proof-reading. Taking at random St. Vincent de Paul: he 'landed at Aigues-Mortes near Marseilles . . . ' p. 260, and though the expression is Butler's own we are tempted to feel that a little of the 'meticulousness' Father Thurston charmingly deprecates would not here be amiss. No allusion appears to our saint's relations with the Visitandines and St. Francis of Sales, nor to St. Vincent de Paul's letter to Pope Alexander VII soliciting the canonisation of the saintly prince-bishop of Geneva. On p. 264 a quotation makes our saint, 'by nature . . . very subject to anger.' If this is a translation of *prompt à se mettre en colère* which to the French mind gives merely the impression of hastiness or impetuosity, we should not hesitate to call it 'exaggeration.'

These, however, are but insignificant slips which serve to bring out the magnitude of the labour involved in a work so creditable that it deserves assuredly, like the first volumes, a whole century of existence.

T.O'C.

MAGNIFICAT. By René Bazin. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd.; pp. 244; 7/6.)

This novel has all the qualities that M. Bazin's readers have learned to expect from him. The hero's vocation took him from