

Those who have not yet read this work are doing an injustice to their intelligence, while those who already know the first edition will appreciate still more the increased perfection of the second.

H.C.

THE HEROIC LIFE OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL. By Henri Lavedan. Translated by Fr. Leonard, C.M. (Sheed & Ward; 7/6 net.)

Inveterate readers of penny dreadfuls or shilling shockers might find a pleasant change and no less excitement in the life of St. Vincent. Shepherd, schoolboy, university student, the prey of pirates in a stirring sea adventure, chaplain and counsellor to queens and princes, parish priest and galley slave, the founder of two religious congregations and multitudinous other good works, nocturnal collector of armfuls of foundling babies, the friend of kings and convicts, saints and robbers: what more would you have one man to be within the space of two hundred and sixty pages? And if you want horrors, there are the descriptions of the hospitals and the state of the galley-slaves to rouse a shudder.

Fifty years ago hagiographers made the saints mere dummies to be dressed up in every virtue. Their sayings and doings were all pressed into the same service, occasionally with some difficulty, but the biographer usually managed, by ascribing supernatural motives, to transform what was merely natural or even faulty into perfections. Incidents and circumstances which could not be made directly edifying were ignored, whatever light they might have thrown on the saint's life and character.

But lately a reaction has set in, and in some biographies we have almost too much of the setting and not enough of the saint; while the writer's imagination makes free in the natural, not the supernatural sphere. Such is the only fault to be found with M. Lavedan's delightful book. It is like a highly coloured cinema film: the figures live and move, but in silence. It is the saints' relations with God—of which their relations with men are but the result—that make them saints. Much of this inner life must remain a secret, but many of St. Vincent's letters are extant, and would surely help us to know him better than do long *imaginary* soliloquies. Again, while we are given details even of the dress of some quite minor character in the book, we are told nothing at all of the saint's relations with Anne of Austria, nor his great work of ecclesiastical reform on Louis XIV's 'Council of Conscience' during her regency.

Blackfriars

But M. Lavedan's powers of description, which are those of a genius, make the book most fascinating reading; and the translator has done his very difficult task so well that the literary excellence of the original is not lost in the English rendering.

M.B.

THE CATHOLIC DIRECTORY, 1930. (Burns, Oates and Washbourne; 3/6).

The Catholic Directory is an indispensable guide to the practical activities, institutions, and personnel of the Catholic Church in England. It needs no recommendation. A new feature this year is the abolition of the arrangement of parishes and missions by counties; but an Index of Counties is provided instead. It is good value for the money; but I wonder if an even lower price and simpler binding would reward the publishers with a circulation which would justify the reduction.

THE SECULAR PRIESTHOOD. By the Rev. E. J. Mahoney, D.D. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1930, 6/-).

An account of the vocation, training, life and ideals of the secular priest for the benefit of aspirants to the priesthood, and for the instruction of the laity generally, who sometimes have a poor opinion of the secular clergy and sometimes rather foolishly display their preference for regulars. The main part of the book seems to us to have been written in a workman-like fashion; but we have been seriously distracted from it by the last section, which is a not very pleasant argument concerning the priesthood and the religious life. In fact, so far as we are concerned, the sting of the book is in its tail. Are we expected to examine that part, or is it indecent of us to intervene? We have never felt so strongly the force of the adage that comparisons are odious; for we have disliked some of the author's comparisons intensely. We don't like to see him, from the exigencies of his argument, making general charges against the pre-reformation monks. We are sorry that he allowed himself to cite (from Purcell) some of Cardinal Manning's wilder statements. The Cardinal himself, when writing his *Eternal Priesthood*, had more sense than to print such things in that book, and we think Dr. Mahoney would have done better to have left them out of his. In regard to the authors pilloried in his appendix, we are not sure that they are given fair treatment. Vermeersch, for instance, is no fool and is not likely to have meant what the author supposes him to mean; his words will bear another and a just sense. Gury-