

fabulous artefact ascribed to the legendary artist Daedalus. In this second book, now under review, he has described a real artist, with a new spiritual technique, seeking to incarnate his message in a civilization vaster and even more complex than that of Sicily.

He has chosen as his subject the great Jesuit missionary, Matteo Ricci, who in 1583 fulfilled the dying wishes of St Francis Xavier by penetrating the Celestial Empire of China, which had long been sealed off from the Gospel as from all foreign influence. In this enterprise Ricci forms part of the whole picture of Counter-Reformation missionary work, that still-continuing crusade of a true Christian character. Where Ricci is outstanding is in the attitude of mind, the technique he brought to the preaching of the Gospel, a technique which has only lately been recognized as the true norm of missionary endeavour.

This new attitude consisted in recognizing the substantial goodness of the culture to which the Gospel was to be preached and in advancing that Gospel as the realization of something incomplete, not as its negation or destruction. Perhaps, in China, Ricci made a virtue of necessity, recognizing that a frontal attack on its way of life, stable, millennial and prescriptive, was to make failure certain. Precariously established within the country, he could only advance his sacred cause by a flanking movement, by becoming himself a Chinese sage, remarkable for his knowledge of the Confucian classics, and vastly superior to his learned colleagues in mathematics, astronomy and geography. By these means he obtained a hearing for his Gospel message, which would otherwise have been regarded as part of the barbarism which the Chinese expected from any foreigner. It was impossible to accuse the most learned man in China of being a barbarian; his clocks and astrolabes, his maps and writings, his brilliant and friendly discourse with mandarins and statesmen, forbade it. This constructive humility towards an ancient culture reaped a rich reward in the development of the Church in China for the ensuing century.

The subsequent controversy of 'The Chinese Rites' is all too well-known and melancholy a story. None the less, this very capable reconstruction of the career of a great apostle is one for which we should be grateful. It is not altogether clear how far Mr Cronin has allowed his imagination to build upon the letters and reports of Ricci which form the basis of his narrative; occasionally the author's exuberant verbal imagery gets out of hand; but he has given us an admirable picture of an elaborate and often lovely culture and of a true Christian whose sole aim was to restore that culture in Christ.

PAUL FOSTER, O.P.

ABBÉ PIERRE AND THE RAGPICKERS. By Boris Simon. (Harvill Press; 15s.)

The death in Paris of a three-months old baby in the severe winter of

1954 was the seemingly trivial event that aroused the conscience of France and made the name of Abbé Pierre known throughout the world. This tragedy of an innocent child, dying of cold and hunger in an abandoned bus, became the symbol of the lot of thousands, and it needed the burning sincerity of Abbé Pierre to make a whole nation realize its own reproach. But already, in his settlement at 'Emmaus', the priest who had been a Deputy and a leader of the World Federal movement had begun the work of restoring hope and dignity to the homeless and the unfortunate. And this he did not through the elaborate machinery of a 'charitable organization' but through making it possible for the 'companions of Emmaus' to help themselves by building their own houses. He soon attracted every sort of person in need: evicted families, ex-convicts, alcoholics, the rootless victims of war and the German occupation. And there was work for all to do, if only to go out scavenging (and this indeed was a principal source of income). Abbé Pierre spent himself, with the untiring zeal of a St Vincent de Paul, in the service of his 'companions', and despite official obstinacy and the frequent failures of those who had come to him (the only question asked was their need), had already provided a practical answer to an immense problem which French politicians had either ignored or had dismissed as insoluble.

With the vast extension of his mission in the last year M. Simon's book is not concerned. It describes most graphically the work of a man who was ready when the dimensions of the tragedy of poverty and overcrowding were at last properly realized by the public opinion of France. The story of Abbé Pierre is a contemporary application of the perennial meaning of Christian charity, and in a world that has grown used to a secular hope as its salvation Abbé Pierre reaffirms the mission of Christ: a human need that is met for love's sake.

I.E.

ESSAYS ON MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE. By Dorothy Everett. Edited by Patricia Kean. (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Clarendon Press; 18s.)

This work comes to remind us of the loss which medieval English studies suffered by Dorothy Everett's death; but it was characteristic of her whole scholarly life, unhurried, ordered, punctual, that she left behind her unpublished material, some of it commissioned for the *Oxford History of English Literature*, some of it lectures given during the term in which she died, which Miss Kean has been able to print here. In this brief notice only the two Oxford lectures can be mentioned, *Chaucer's Love Visions* and '*Troilus and Criseyde*'. The second of these, the '*Troilus*' lecture, represents the more difficult undertaking, since so many critics, notably Professor C. S. Lewis in *The Allegory of Love*, have