

JOURNEY TO LOURDES. By Alexis Carrel. (Hamish Hamilton; 5s.)

In a Cambridge lecture room in 1939 a don from the psychological laboratory expressed the opinion that the cures at Lourdes were 'hysterical'—the same opinion to which Dr Carrel held before he went there. Perhaps there was more excuse for such an opinion, baldly stated, in 1903. At any rate Carrel went to Lourdes to confirm his opinion; but instead he saw a girl whom he diagnosed as being at the point of death from tubercular peritonitis, cured. This book is the dramatised story of the event as Dr Carrel wrote it down, on his return from Lourdes; the MS was found amongst other unpublished manuscripts. It is well written and the impact of the miracle on his sceptical mind is well conveyed. Yet for all its virtues, this little book shows the sterility of the agnostic approach; the cure led to a very emotional few minutes and to a determination to investigate further, more scientifically, a determination to be sceptical about the dogmas of scientists as well of theologians. It did not lead to faith in Jesus Christ. The story, with its conclusion of apparent belief, seems to have remained suspect to Carrel himself, since he never published it. The preface by Charles Lindbergh does not clarify matters. Of about 20,000 words the book is expensive at 5s.

J.M.T.

A SAINT IN HYDE PARK. By E. A. Siderman. (Geoffrey Bles; 7s. 6d.)

Three years ago (1947) Mr Siderman published a book entitled *With Father Vincent at Marble Arch*, which was sponsored by Blackfriars Publications, approved by the Archbishop of Birmingham and had all the appearances of having been vetted by those who were in a position to know more about the subject than even Fr Vincent's most assiduous heckler. In the new book all these recommendations are conspicuously lacking. The author has launched out on his own: he advertised for material in the press as if he were assuming the office of an accredited official biographer and in the process he has spoiled a good thing. He has searched high and low for more facts and anecdotes to pad out his book and has added statements which are obviously apocryphal, e.g. neither Mr Siderman nor anyone else ever heard Father Vincent ask: 'Why, when water has been in the world for thousands of years have you not washed your neck?' (p.105). It is one of those 'chestnuts' that were going the rounds before Father McNabb was born. The value of the original book was its spontaneity and a certain simple sincerity: the writer was obviously recording what he had seen and heard. By drawing upon other witnesses indiscriminately he abdicates the position of the perfect Boswell that Mr Sheed gives him in his Introduction.

The author and the publishers have reproduced as frontispiece without permission a portrait of which the Dominican authorities hold the copyright and an Epilogue by a Dominican has been added without his

sanction. This is a pity because it makes him say of the new work, things which only applied to the original booklet. Moreover the reader will be misled into believing that the Epilogue implies Dominican approval.

Heckling is a game that requires little skill. All the skill is displayed by the heckled who resembles a batsman playing a kind of nightmare cricket and being pelted with anything that comes to hand and from every point of the compass. Certainly heckling is easier than biography.

The title of the book is unfortunate because there is an ecclesiastical prohibition against referring to holy people as saints before they are officially canonised. The author who is described on the wrapper as an Orthodox Jew has no scruple about anticipating the decision of Holy Church. This is edifying and generous of him but he should be warned that such anticipations sometimes affect adversely a holy man's cause. But on the other hand if Father Vincent's cause is ever introduced it will surely tell greatly in favour of his heroic patience that he suffered twenty-five years of hecklers of whom the author of this book was the chief.

By deserting his position as a witness of what he himself saw and heard at Marble Arch and by straying far and wide into the fields of hagiography the author has, in my opinion, ruined a good thing.

BERNARD DELANY, O.P.

AN INTRODUCTION TO HOLINESS. By Henri Petitot, O.P. (Mercier Press; 8s. 6d.)

MESSAGE DE ST FRANCOIS DE SALES POUR CE TEMPS. By Claude Quinard. (Collection '*Les grands Temoignages*'. (Casterman; 63fr.)

FR Petitot's book is addressed chiefly to those living a 'contemplative life translating itself into action'. Thus besides the traditional teaching on asceticism, prayer, love of God and our neighbour, written—I had almost said 'talked'—rather discursively, there are chapters on the apostolic life, study, and (this not perhaps the most satisfactory) on religious art. There is constant reference to the practice and precepts of the saints, with special emphasis on the teaching of St Teresa of Lisieux. The preface claims that all theological and technical expressions have been avoided to make the book 'palatable to a greater number of people'. Whether or not it is possible to write about a serious subject without using the terms proper to it, it may well be that what makes many religious books 'unpalatable' is not their special vocabulary but their curious use of the rest of the language. This is particularly noticeable in translation, when, as in this book, it is not uniformly successful. Incidentally, French forms of names (e.g., Pothin, Blandine) should be Englished; there is no point in giving French titles to the works of St Teresa of Avila; and the increasingly common use of 'observation' when 'observance' is meant is better avoided. But the book does use terms that are 'technical', e.g., 'anagogic