

dead Christ's forms, contrasted with the mourners' furrowed tear-stained heads, establishes the power and majesty of the Slain God: a quality which, apart from the lower technical skill in the New York version, makes the author's claim that the latter was the model for the Brera picture doubtful.

It is her analysis of Mantegna's relation to his precursors and youthful contemporaries which is most valuable and she rightly stresses his quest for independence, relating it to his departure for Mantua. Thus he developed an intensely personal solution of the problems of form, texture, space and composition. So absolute was his achievement of freedom, that he alone among his contemporaries could successfully attempt the programmes devised at the behest of that formidable Renaissance blue-stocking, Isabella D'Este, without sacrificing his autonomy.

He was above all a man of his epoch, saying his prayers to 'the Divine Thunderer and his most glorious Mother' with no sense of mockery. But even if the author sometimes fails to evoke the spirit of the period, nevertheless this is a book which students of Renaissance art should certainly possess.

MARIA SHIRLEY

SAINT ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY. By Nesta de Robeck. (Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee; \$3.00.)

At last a life of St Elizabeth of Hungary has been written in English. Nesta de Robeck has written it, and that in itself speaks for the excellence of the book. Strangely enough, for surely she is one of the most attractive of saints, St Elizabeth is not well known in this country. One legend, however, has captured the imagination. This tells how Elizabeth, a Princess of Hungary, already married at the age of fourteen to Ludwig, Landgraf of Thuringia, was one winter's day taking a load of bread to the starving poor during a time of famine. Her husband, riding homewards, met her and her two girl companions unexpectedly. Wondering to see his wife so heavily laden, Ludwig dismounted and lifted a corner of the cloak covering the hamper. The bread had been miraculously changed into a fragrant mass of red and white roses. Ludwig exclaimed: 'What! roses at this time of the year!' Elizabeth replied, 'They aren't roses, they are loaves.' Then she too looked into the hamper and saw the flowers. Ludwig was not annoyed. He understood and let her pass on her way.

This legend gives the keynote. The marriage of Elizabeth and Ludwig was founded on love and trust. She had been happy as a child. Miss de Robeck gives a delightful picture of her early days in the old castle of Wartburg, the home of her future husband's father

and mother. She was happy as a wife. But before the birth of her third child Ludwig died on his way to the Crusades. Elizabeth was broken-hearted.

The remainder of Elizabeth's short life is graphically told. Ludwig's relations turned against her; his old supporters deserted her; her director, a ruthless individual, tormented her in such a way that she nearly starved herself. She left her home to live a life of complete penury. Unable to maintain her children under such conditions, she was forced to place them with others.

A disciple of St Francis of Assisi, though she had never seen him, Elizabeth lived in his way in the literal following of the Gospel teaching, and surely no Franciscan ever lived a life more deprived of outward consolations than this former Princess. But through it all the inner joy that had been hers from childhood never completely left her. God had always come first with Elizabeth, and during the last few years of her life she gave herself utterly to the service of his poor. She died at the age of twenty-four.

At the end of the book is a full appendix. This comprises extracts of the depositions concerning the miracles, and the cause and order of her canonization. Certain letters are included, and the Bull of Canonization is given.

Elizabeth of Hungary is patroness of the Third Order of St Francis.

FLORENS ROCH

NEXT TO ODDLINESS. By Paul Jennings. (Max Reinhardt; 9s. 6d.)

With the appearance of a fourth collection of his essays from *The Observer*, Mr Jennings goes into the grim category of established authors. But, oddly enough, his writing was never so innocent or free: you have the feeling that each piece is a wholly fresh achievement. This is because Mr Jennings has a sympathy so universal and a capacity for surprise so huge that there isn't a day that passes or a street that he sees without enough material for a shelf-full of *Oddly* books. (And his variations on a single title reflect just this ability to see so much further than most of us ever do what is involved in even a single word or phrase.)

It is this astonishing rediscovery of the familiar that is Mr Jennings' special grace. How humane and yet how devastating is his inspection of our usual selves! Scarcely an essay is without its sudden illuminations, its brilliant fantasies, which yet are firmly grounded in a Christian view of man's essential dignity. 'To the Railway, man is a thinking parcel'; it is apt, of course, but it has overtones that have a further meaning. And who but Paul Jennings could have described a trolley-bus as 'like the Czechoslovakian pavilion at a very small World's