

in English, especially in view of the tremendous work of research carried out for so long by Father George Schurhammer. On the other hand it is true that the new edition of the saint's letters by Fathers Schurhammer and Wicki appeared only in 1943-44, and eight years is not an unconscionable time to wait for their reduction to the purposes of a biographer. Now we have the result, and what more could be asked? The thirty years' labours of a great scholar, the sixty-six volumes of the *Monumenta historica S.J.*, to say nothing of other sources, digested into half a thousand pages by Father James Brodrick, than whom no one is better equipped in every way to have undertaken the work.

It is a book which it is superfluous, indeed impertinent, to praise: it is definitive in English, as a biography of its subject and a literary work of high distinction. But then nobody who has read Father Brodrick's *St Robert Bellarmine* or *St Peter Canisius*, or his essays in *A Procession of Saints*, is in need of being recommended to *St Francis Xavier*; for others, recommendation is implied in this reviewer's enthusiasm. Father Schurhammer, we are told, has found 'the real Xavier under the great pyramid of pious accretion built upon his humble bones by the mistaken reverence of biographers and editors throughout four centuries', and it is free of these accretions that Father Brodrick presents him; and thus stripped, Francis is an even mightier and more holy figure than previous writers had led us to believe. We are apt to think of him as a man of the Renaissance: 'he was mediaeval to the core', says Father Brodrick, and the portrait he paints justifies the claim. Such a character, a 'mediaeval Jesuit' in the India and Japan of the sixteenth century, is peculiarly suited to Father Brodrick's sensitive and virile art; his wide allusiveness and sometimes salty wit relieve the sobriety of a narrative that is not only the life of, but a most worthy monument to, one who was in no merely formal sense a confessor of the faith.

The publishers have done their work well: *Saint Francis Xavier* is a handsome book, with necessary maps, a dozen unusually good illustrations, and an excellent index.

DONALD ATTWATER

ST VINCENT DE PAUL. By Mgr Jean Calvet. Translated by Lancelot C. Sheppard. (Burns Oates; 21s.)

This very fine biography of St Vincent de Paul by the former rector of the Institut Catholique of Paris, owes a great deal of its power to the fact that the author, instead of writing the kind of hagiography which makes us feel that the saints are abnormalities inhabiting realms of spiritual fantasy, has, after giving us an excellent account of M. Vincent's origins, character and training, followed up as many of the varied trends of the history of the France of Vincent's day as are relevant to the saint's activities. By this method, which he pursues with great erudition and

delicacy of perception, Mgr Calvet shows us how M. Vincent's peasant sagacity, realistic common sense, genius for organisation together with a most shrewd assessment of character, entered time and again into critical phases of the contemporary scene, making issue with such varied evils as the ignorance of the country priest; the misery of the Paris poor; the Jansenist heresy; famine in Picardy and Lorraine—epic history; slavery; the civil disturbances of the Frondes; while at the same time his spiritual direction of the Queen and his wise human counsel on general matters imply that his beneficent influence was brought to bear as well on questions of royal policy and thus directly affected the course of French and European history.

But Vincent's unique greatness lay elsewhere. 'His Christian charity was not an acquired virtue . . . it was the sublimation of a very strong . . . natural feeling. When he spoke of the poor, the sick and foundlings it was this feeling which endowed his voice with those tender motherly tones unique in that century of unbending reason.' It was this abundantly loving nature made prolific by grace which made the world its mission field. Part of the greatness of this book is that it continually recalls our gaze from the massive superstructure of Vincent's achievement to the humble peasant integrity which God fructified beyond all human computation.

CATHERINE DANIEL

SAINTS FOR NOW. Edited by Clare Boothe Luce. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

This is a new kind of 'Saint book' and a very happy idea. Various friends of the editor's have contributed lives of their favourites and some have added a drawing. They represent a most varied cross-section and include such different sorts of people as Kurt Reinhardt, Sister Madeleva, Karl Stein, Rebecca West, E. I. Watkin, Paul Gallico, and Kate O'Brien.

Barbara Ward's 'St Thomas More' is excellent, and Alfred Noyes' 'St John' is deeply moving and full of poetry. Perhaps Bruce Marshall's 'Curé of Ars' does not quite come up to expectations, but it contains some characteristic sentences. For instance, speaking of the work-a-day education which was all the saint meted out to the parish children: 'the Curé was probably right: . . . it is the half-educated who work the harm in the world. . . . Indeed, the ineptitudes of the popular press suggest that it is a mistake to teach the majority of people to read at all.' Thomas Merton's 'St John of the Cross' savours slightly of the same species of spiritual indelicacy that permitted the cloistered author to unbare his soul without a *nom-de-plume*. The most entertaining life is the most unpromising before reading—that of St Simeon Stylites, by George Lamb. I hope it will explain this bizarre personage in the heavenly ranks to many a Catholic who, like myself, has hitherto felt slightly embarrassed when unbelievers mentioned him.

JOAN GRANT