

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