

Blackfriars

progression, *from generation to generation*. . . . From these spring families that are nominally Catholic, and those distressing Protestant families bearing surnames which for generations had been associated with Catholic Ireland or Catholic Lancashire.'

A.F.

THE SEVEN NICHES. By Egerton Clarke. (London: Cecil Palmer; 2/6.)

Mr. Egerton Clarke is a Catholic poet whose earlier volumes have won praise and popularity. In *The Seven Niches* he breaks new ground and offers a long poem in the form of a Catholic legend. The idea has the charm of originality and the flavour of experiment: both are justified. He has succeeded in a difficult task. A long poem such as this will tax any poet's sincerity and prove whether he is capable of sustaining his inspiration to the end. Even the physical strain of producing a long poem defeats many a writer. It demands vision, uniformity of mood, consistent style, and balanced expression. A standard tone must be maintained, together with a definite level of inspiration. Atmosphere must be created and upheld. Facility of expression, obvious clichés, commonplace rhymes may creep into a purely narrative poem, where the story is the first thing that matters. Tennyson and Masefield are examples of such almost inevitable lapses. But *The Seven Niches* is more like a richly embroidered tapestry than an unadorned tale. Every detail is complete in colour and execution; every tiny piece will bear close inspection. That is the author's triumph. He has weighed every word, re-cast every phrase. He has considered every image, every metaphor before giving his final sanction. Therefore the poem has emerged clear-cut, glistening, chaste as a masterpiece in stained glass.

Because the poem was not easy to write it is not easy to read. It does not carry the reader along with easy rhyme and dancing rhythm. For its understanding there must be concentration—even a mood of spiritual sympathy, almost of devotion.

E.E.

THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS. By Alban Butler. A new edition, corrected, amplified and edited by Herbert Thurston, S.J., and Donald Attwater. Vol. vii, July. (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1932; 7/6.)

This new edition of Butler's incomparable work so valiantly and ably undertaken by Father Thurston, has already on the appearance of previous volumes called forth the admiration and