

unpublished data, bearing on the life and character of the saint. His interpretation is not merely sympathetic, it is enlightening.

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NO PLASTER SAINT. By Gabriel Cesbron. (Hollis and Carter; 7s. 6d.)

This play (*Briser la Statue*) was first produced at the Melingue, Paris, 1947, and received much commendation from the dramatic critics. Nor need one seek far for the reason for the play's success, since the playwright draws St Teresa of Lisieux not as an imaginary and artificial person (such as certain and outrageous popularisers of the Little Flower would construct), but as a creature of flesh and blood in love with God. Gabriel Cesbron has gone to the primary sources and authentic documents for evidence of the saint's life, and consequently his text has the ring and appeal of genuineness. The prologue is set in a monastery, for long disused but now serving as a rendezvous in the weekend for the intelligentsia. In a niche of the cloisters stands a statue of the saint, which catches the attention of the intellectuals, and they engage their host, a priest, in a discussion of the merits and demerits of the Little Way. The guests unfavourably contrast the saint with her namesake of Avila, pour scorn on the idea of Spiritual Childhood, a modern fetish, a cheap, albeit successful type of ecclesiastical propaganda. The priest counters their glib and supercilious theories, and whilst reconstructing the life of St Teresa, the scene changes and we behold the quadrangle of the Lisieux Carmel. In this, the first act, we see the saint treated as a member of the community, and learn from a number of the community their own impressions of Sœur Thérèse. Some hold her in high regard, others view her less sympathetically. Conventual life amply bears witness that a prophet is not without honour save in his own country. We have also depicted for us St Teresa as Novice Mistress, instructing, chiding, enlightening, restraining, encouraging those entrusted to her direction and care. Herein the author accurately and discerningly sets forth the way of Spiritual Childhood with its ideals of fortitude, magnanimity, wisdom, as against its false counterpart of narrow-mindedness, scrupulosity, fanatical and slavish carrying out of observances for their own sake.

In the second act the scene is cast in the cell of St Teresa who, exhausted and spent by tuberculosis, is further subjected to severe trial and temptation (chiefly to doubt and despair) by Satan, by the vision of what she might have been in the world, by the memory of her father, deserted by his children and now so helpless and lonely. The third act is the deathbed of the saint, details of which, despite their authenticity, might, we venture to suggest, have been omitted with advantage. One's general impression is that the saint is too long a-dying.

The translator has discharged her task with credit. The script is clear, and distinguished from stage directions (how simple, but how sane and practical they are) by use of italics: a pleasing production.

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