

Fair', or could have evoked such strangeness from the Calendar of Events issued by B.E.A.: 'May 8-16. Ninth Congress of International Union for Thermalism and Climatothermaltherapy (Dubrovnik)?'

The special quality of Mr Jennings' humour owes something to G. K. Chesterton, but it would be quite wrong to see in him a streamlined, mid-century version of the Old Master. It is truer to say that the genius of both owes much to a common source, and in the case of Mr Jennings one can be grateful that our own time, with its follies and its goodness too, has found in him so penetrating and yet so charitable an inspector.

I.E.

THE SPEAR. By Louis de Wohl. (Gollancz; 15s.)

Here indeed is a *tour-de-force* of imaginative invention. The author tells an original version of the story of the Centurion, later known as St Longinus, who pierced the side of our Lord with his lance. It is quite different from the *Golden Legend* history of the puissant knight Longinus, but then, as Mr Donald Attwater says in his *Dictionary of Saints*, 'the truth about his life is not known'.

The Judean scene, the nationalist aspirations, the indignation of the priesthood against the preaching of the Carpenter of Nazareth are colourfully depicted. The Jewish versions of familiar names, somewhat bewildering at first, accentuate the local colour. The climax of Calvary is movingly described.

It would be an exaggeration to say there is a surprise on every page and no one expects the historical novelist to confine himself within the narrow limits of fact. The impact of the author's original inventions is perhaps less telling since *The Robe*, *The Silver Chalice* and other American novels of that genre. They cry out for, and usually get, the full CinemaScope treatment. *The Spear* is a distinguished successor. An incidental diversion for the reader sufficiently well-informed about Hollywood stars might be casting the roles for the screen version.

KIERAN MULVEY, O.P.

THE HOLY WELLS OF WALES. By Francis Jones. (University of Wales Press; 12s. 6d.)

This interesting book will be of value both to the student of Welsh pre-history and of the Early Church in Wales. In it the holy wells of Wales are listed and classified in full for the first time and discussed under such headings as 'wells and megaliths', 'wells in the lives of the saints', 'distribution', 'belief and ritual', etc. The different types of wells and their distribution are shown also on six maps at the end of the book.

Taken in conjunction with *The Settlements of the Celtic Saints in*

*Wales*, by E. G. Bowen, published by the same Press only a short while previously, this book should furnish further clues as to the provenance and cultus of the Celtic saints in Wales and fill in the picture already presented by Professor Bowen. Oversights in a detailed survey of this sort are no doubt inevitable. For instance, the author omits to classify the well of St Ishow at Parrishow in Breconshire as a rag well, yet I myself saw the bush above it liberally bedecked with these relics only a few years ago. It is a pity that the survey does not overstep the present political boundary of Wales into the border counties, but this is something we may hope the author will remedy at a later date.

There is perhaps some needless mystification in the statement that in considering holy wells 'we are face to face with living forms of the oldest, lowest, most primitive religion in the world . . . which, crouching close to the earth, lets other creeds blow over it and outlives them one and all', but it is only fair to the author to say that these are not his own words, though quoted by him, and that, on the whole, he seems to have avoided the esoteric in his treatment of the subject. Such mystification is unnecessary, for we are already aware that the element of water, by its very nature, attracts to itself a sacramental and cleansing significance in all ages and in all religions. It is easy to understand how, for many, the water of wells and fountains has appeared to have a life of its own, and he who has had the good fortune to read Belloc's *Four Men* will learn there (if he has not learnt already) the compulsion which has caused men to worship streams and their sources.

R. WYNNE

FRANCIS TREGIAN. By P. A. Boyan and G. R. Lamb. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

Francis Tregian was the gentleman in whose house Cuthbert Mayne was arrested by Richard Grenville, and who suffered for his harbouring of the priest by loss of lands and thirty years of imprisonment. After his release he retired to Lisbon, and has left behind him there some partially-sensed aura of holiness. Interesting things happened after his death. There was some considerable cult, which has apparently revived quite recently. His son Francis, committed to the Fleet some fourteen years after his father left it, spent his time in making the great, indeed the priceless, collection of music known to us as the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, though in fact there are two more 'volumes' to his work, one in the British Museum and the other in New York. We are, then, right in the middle of history; not only the simple story of one devoted priest's martyrdom, but the whole bizarre life of the age, with its juxtaposition of court sycophancy and country estate; of hideous death and long years in prison during which