

concerned with a man's destiny as an adopted son of God. The book is written for everyman in simple language and, in spite of a certain amount of needless repetition, is not difficult to read.

Of the three parts into which *Difficulties in Life* is divided the first is the most important, 'Of the Need and the Chances of Improvement'. In this section Dr Allers, persuasively and convincingly, shows that human character, contrary to general modern belief, is anything but immutable, and gives instances of character changes in human experience. He is most insistent on establishing this point, indeed it is the foundation upon which his whole work rests—characters can and do change, and not necessarily once only within the span of a human life; one instance alone would be sufficient to disprove any theory of immutability, but in fact there are many within the daily experience of everyone. Self-knowledge ploughs the furrow in which the seed of a new character may be sown. The difficulty about self-knowledge is that 'man judges all things, all actions, all events from his personal point of view. In many a respect he does not know where in fact he stands. His "standpoint" is hidden to him; he cannot see it, because he is standing on it'. From Dr Allers a sincere and careful reader may learn how to discover the hidden depths of his own character. Whether he will ever actually know them, of course, will depend upon himself; the writer does not pretend to be able to perform the analysis for the reader but only to show its possibility and the manner of its accomplishment.

Part II, 'On Troubles, Difficulties and Faults', reads rather like an examination of conscience. In it the sincere seeker after self-knowledge will recognise much of himself, whilst the reader who does not desire to know himself will have a grand time applying the faults to his neighbours in whom, in greater or less degree, they will certainly be found. *Difficulties in Life* will have nothing to offer this type of reader, one 'who is not as other men'. For him prayer and grace are the only remedies. 'How to Help One's Self', the third part of the book, subdivided into 'What to Know' and 'What to Do', adds little to what has gone before. After recapitulating, the Doctor makes suggestions designed to assist, in a practical way, a person who wishes to re-form his character.

This is a book worth having. It is sincere, instructive and helpful. Its tone is Catholic, its doctrine culled to a great extent from standard spiritual writers; if it fulfilled no other need it would be worth while to read this book as an exercise in humility. J. N. P.

COMPANIONS FOR ETERNITY. BY A. Carré, O.P. Translated by Clare Sheppard. (Blackfriars; 2s. 6d.)

After explaining to a small group of reasonably alert and educated Catholic young people that St Paul, in describing marriage as a great sacrament, was not directly testifying to its being one of the seven, but calling attention to the mystery, the reviewer was asked bluntly,

'But what is there mysterious about marriage?' It is not an uncommon attitude. Lip-service is paid to the sacramental nature of marriage, some care is taken to observe the canon law regulating it, and a not inconsiderable amount of literature is produced and read on the *problem* of married life; but the *mystery* remains not only elusive in its nature, but little recognised as a fact. The great value of Père Carré's book is that it boldly accepts the mystery from the beginning and indicates how the more familiar features of marriage spring from that.

The natural law on marriage is firm and clear, but the consequence of elaborating first the conditions of the natural institution and then adding—usually with a 'but'—the hackneyed phrase, 'Our Lord has elevated it to the dignity of a sacrament', is to create an impression that God has very surprisingly attached an outpouring of grace to a concession to human weakness. How much better to begin with the historical fact—for there never was a state of pure nature—of 'the wound in man's side from which God has made woman; and the suffering in his heart, in his senses, and in some sort in his soul, until God's image has been made integral!' (Incidentally, how much light is there thrown on the sacrifice and the value of chastity: the wound remains, but the pain is assuaged by the Creator of womanly tenderness.)

The responsibility of this grace-aided choice, the nature of the self-giving and its fundamental dependence on the Trinity—source and exemplar of all self-giving—the burdens and the-mutual growth, the mutual savouring of God's gifts and the enrichment of life—natural and supernatural—by the communication between children and parents, all these aspects of marriage are delicately handled and with great dignity. Throughout the book the permanence of the married state is stressed; it is this fact, that it is a way of life—of a *whole* life—and thus a vocation, belonging to that part of the divine scheme that we cannot but consider the highest, which gives to matrimony its balance and which far more than the merely physical aspect prevents fretfulness, worry, 'nerves', and worse disorders. Most important of all, the necessity of heroism is frankly stated: for sanctity is nothing if not heroic and marriage is a way to sanctity, as this little book amply and nobly demonstrates.

EDWARD QUINCY.

ANY SAINT TO ANY NUN. Letters selected and arranged by a Benedictine of Stanbrook. (Burns Oates; 8s. 6d.)

This beautifully printed book contains extracts from the writings of various saints, addressed to women consecrated to God. There are thirty-six sections, and their writers vary from St Athanasius to St Teresa of Lisieux and from Blessed Henry Suso to St Francis of Sales. There is something for every stage of the religious life, from the first wonderings about a vocation to the preparation for death.