

and mother. She was happy as a wife. But before the birth of her third child Ludwig died on his way to the Crusades. Elizabeth was broken-hearted.

The remainder of Elizabeth's short life is graphically told. Ludwig's relations turned against her; his old supporters deserted her; her director, a ruthless individual, tormented her in such a way that she nearly starved herself. She left her home to live a life of complete penury. Unable to maintain her children under such conditions, she was forced to place them with others.

A disciple of St Francis of Assisi, though she had never seen him, Elizabeth lived in his way in the literal following of the Gospel teaching, and surely no Franciscan ever lived a life more deprived of outward consolations than this former Princess. But through it all the inner joy that had been hers from childhood never completely left her. God had always come first with Elizabeth, and during the last few years of her life she gave herself utterly to the service of his poor. She died at the age of twenty-four.

At the end of the book is a full appendix. This comprises extracts of the depositions concerning the miracles, and the cause and order of her canonization. Certain letters are included, and the Bull of Canonization is given.

Elizabeth of Hungary is patroness of the Third Order of St Francis.

FLORENS ROCH

NEXT TO ODDLINESS. By Paul Jennings. (Max Reinhardt; 9s. 6d.)

With the appearance of a fourth collection of his essays from *The Observer*, Mr Jennings goes into the grim category of established authors. But, oddly enough, his writing was never so innocent or free: you have the feeling that each piece is a wholly fresh achievement. This is because Mr Jennings has a sympathy so universal and a capacity for surprise so huge that there isn't a day that passes or a street that he sees without enough material for a shelf-full of *Oddly* books. (And his variations on a single title reflect just this ability to see so much further than most of us ever do what is involved in even a single word or phrase.)

It is this astonishing rediscovery of the familiar that is Mr Jennings' special grace. How humane and yet how devastating is his inspection of our usual selves! Scarcely an essay is without its sudden illuminations, its brilliant fantasies, which yet are firmly grounded in a Christian view of man's essential dignity. 'To the Railway, man is a thinking parcel'; it is apt, of course, but it has overtones that have a further meaning. And who but Paul Jennings could have described a trolley-bus as 'like the Czechoslovakian pavilion at a very small World's

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*