

Something New

SAINTS AMONG SOPHISTICATES

In this world so dominated by the pagan principles of materialism and secularism, is it possible for one to become a saint? If you want to find an example of one who although living under such conditions did actually become a saint, then I advise you to read this most interesting and delightful book by Evelyn Waugh.

It is the amazing story of a woman who was born and reared in pagan times and lived in an atmosphere filled with the conflicting forces of her age—Christianity and paganism. It is simply the retelling of the legend of St. Helena—the story of a young princess whose marriage to a young Roman officer, Constantius, leads her into the intriguing life of the courts. Divorced by her husband because of political motives she becomes a Christian. In the last years of her life she seeks successfully to find the True Cross so that she can exemplify the true implications of Christianity to those who were becoming Christians merely because it was fashionable, and to those who envisaged Christianity as a maze of mysticism.

The author of this book is one of the foremost English writers of the present day. In this book he deviates from his usual mode of writing but nevertheless he achieves his aim. In it he gives us a brief sketch of an empress, a widow, and a saint. His purpose in writing this work was to dispel the theory of a woman who, on her return from Palestine, declared the legend of the finding of the True Cross by St. Helena to be false.

Helena, though it does not contain any complex plot or brilliant array of characters, is nevertheless a thoroughly interesting and delightful book. Although it may arouse much sympathy and admiration for this saint, we cannot help but feel that the author left us without telling us enough about her. Although it is well written it may not stir up a great devotion to this wonderful saint. Of this book Waugh says, "Just something to be read." Yes, but with delight and satisfaction.

—PETER DUNPHY '53