

THE HIGH GREEN HILL. By Gerald Vann, O.P. (Collins; 7s. 6d.)

THE SEVEN SWORDS. By Gerald Vann, O.P. (Collins; 5s.)

When Father Vann began writing, many years ago now, his style was at times excessively allusive and a little encumbered. His two latest books have a simplicity of manner and clarity of thought that, in a world where neither is to be readily found, give great distinction to his work. Here, one feels, is a Catholic writer and preacher who is a man talking to modern men. He knows their mind, discerns their spiritual needs, and translates Catholic truth so that it is acceptable to them. Constantly one is aware that Fr Vann has *realised* for himself the meaning of great Christian truths and doctrines, has stripped them of their technical verbiage, and so communicates them to his readers.

If one says that all the old themes that make up the stuff of Fr Vann's thought are here it must not be taken that there is mere repetition. Not only are they seen more clearly, but they are brought to bear on each contemporary situation. The conflict of good and evil (there is a very grave essay on the power of Satan), the true meaning of love, friendship and sacrifice, the meaning of pain, suffering and sin within the Christian context, and yet, irrepressibly, delight in created beauty, these are the themes that are woven into this collection of sermons, broadcast talks and essays. Several of these seem to us outstandingly good: *Man's response to the Trinity, Confession and Health of Soul* (wise and enlightened; *O si sic omnes!*), the long essay on the Mass written for non-Catholics and emphasising exactly what is necessary, and the characteristic *The Making of Art and the Praise of God*.

In the second book, a series of seven sermons, two things are unusually good. First, the introduction (which first appeared as an article in *Life of the Spirit*) on the restoration, and reintegration of the sinner, who is shown how to draw good out of the evil that was his, will certainly bring much consolation to the ordinary struggling Christian. It is a good example of the author's almost limitless compassion for the sinner whom he understands so well. Secondly, there is the striking first sermon on Mary as the Mother and the Maid and what qualities these two apparently contradictory experiences brought to her. It begins in a contemplation of human nature and ends in theology, bringing a really new insight into the nature of the Mother of God.

Over all this somewhat haphazard collection of sermons, articles, broadcast addresses (which do not make the best of reading) broods the spirit of contemplation. Fr Vann makes old things new, and his gaze turns successively from God to the heart of man, from man to the world of today and sweeps them all back to God whence they came.

We are sure these two little books will do great good.

J. D. CRICHTON.