Of Interest to Women

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If some one had happened to ask us within the past few years, "What American writer do you think would be best qualified to write a really good, really human, really interesting, really inspiring life of a saint?" we should probably have replied after a moment's thought, "Leonard Feeney, S.J."

Not that anyone would necessarily have put the question in just that way. But anyone who had delighted in Father Feeney's charming volumes of verse, and had seen in Fish on Fridays that his prose too was whimsical and tender and charming as well as solid—anyone could have decided that if the life of a saint were to be written, Leonard Feeney would write it.

Fortunately for us, the idea of writing one did come to him. And, also fortunately for the scope it offered, his talent was to be well exercised by the subject—the American saint for whom he has such enthusiasm, realized in the person of Elizabeth Seton, foundress of the American Sisters of Charity.

Mother Seton has not been canonized, although her cause has been introduced. It is Father Feeney's hope that she will be—and it will be the hope of all who read his book. He says so many delightful things about sanctity that it is a temptation to quote wholesale. "A saint is a person struck by the lightning of God's grace," he says... "God's saints are primarily the result of His predilection." "Let us not reduce these exquisite souls to the level of our own mediocrity," Thus he pleads for the recognition of a saint as a saint, instead of as a "nice" person, a "good fellow."

Doubtless the author felt that a slight explanation of what sanctity is was needed as an excuse to his readers for his not finding any flaws in his subject. They simply were not there, he says in effect; and his enthusiasm is rather boyish and correspondingly charming.

The facts in the life of Mother Seton are very well known, as is her work. But neither facts nor work are so important here as what she was. What she was is unmistakably delineated by Father Feeney.

In his own inimitable way, he has given humorous or earnest or personal asides—such as a profound elucidation of the difference between natural and Christian virtues; and a model description of what a nun is. A spirit of humility pervades the book, as well as a spirit of light-heartedness and of intense and understanding Catholicism—from the first lofty paragraph to the concluding tribute to "our saint, our country's glory, An American Woman!"

An American Woman is published by the America Press at $2.00.

July begins another fiscal year for the government and for business—but to the housewife it is just another month and a few more bills to be paid. Yet those who have "budget-itis" (not in Webster, but it should be) may be interested in a tabulation made recently by a Washington Bureau of Home Economics. It is of special interest now when much publicity has been given to the winner of a prize awarded to the "best country newspaper correspondent of 1938."

(The winner characteristically admired New York's habit of planting things in every available spot, but deplored the "lack of distance"—"Out home one can be alone, but to be alone in New York you have to shut yourself up in your mind.")

The results of the cost-of-living survey showed that farmers spend more for their clothes than do their wives—but when they move to town, the scales tip violently in the other direction. Nowhere, in country, village, or city, does either husband or wife spend more than one hundred dollars annually on clothes, until the family income has reached three thousand dollars.

Very few reports were made of expenses for "feminine fripperies." But in four western cities,
twenty wives whose husbands' salaries topped five thousand dollars a year averaged thirty-six dollars each for "other clothing" which they could not classify. Every woman must feel a glow of understanding for their inability to be more specific.

Because no one else can say things quite so beautifully as Cardinal Newman, we print here an excerpt on the Assumption of Our Lady from his "Discourses to Mixed Congregations":

*Their Risen Queen*

She died in private. It became Him who died for the world, to die in the world's sight; it became the great Sacrifice to be lifted up on high, as a light that could not be hid. But she, the lily of Eden, who had always dwelt out of the sight of man, fittingly did she die in the garden's shade and amid the sweet flowers in which she had lived. Her departure made no noise in the world. The Church went about her common duties, preaching, converting, suffering; there were persecutions, there was fleeing from place to place, there were martyrs, there were triumphs; at length the rumor spread abroad that the Mother of God was no longer upon earth. Pilgrims went to and fro; they sought for her relics, but they found them not; did she die at Ephesus? or did she die at Jerusalem? Reports varied; but her tomb could not be pointed out, or if it was found, it was open, and instead of her pure and fragrant body, there was a growth of lilies from the earth which she had touched. So enquirers went home marveling and waiting for further light. And then it was said how that when her dissolution was at hand, and her soul was to pass in triumph before the judgment-seat of her Son, the Apostles were suddenly gathered together in one place, even in the Holy City, to bear part in the joyful ceremonial; how that they buried her with fitting rites; how that the third day, when they came to the tomb, they found it empty, and angelic choirs with their glad voices were heard singing day and night the glories of their risen Queen. O Mary, as is befitting, you are soul and body with your Son and God in heaven, and we are enabled to celebrate, not only your death, but your Assumption. (Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.)

Step into a plane at 5:10 P. M. in New York and arrive at Los Angeles at ten minutes to eight the next morning. A single night does the trick—and think of the long weary months which the journey took less than a century ago! The creaking of the rough covered wagons, the constant danger of Indian attacks; the burning heat and the cold of winter, as brave men and women forged their way relentlessly to a land which must have seemed an eternity away! Does the modern traveler who accepts modern conveniences ever stop with a thought of gratitude for the pioneers of travel—for the foolhardy but glorious experiences of the inventors of airplanes, as well as the plodding but inspiring pioneers of the West?

Creatures of time, we are inclined to forget that we have a heritage too of timelessness. "If you want stalactites on your ceiling," advises a current newspaper, "arrange for a very slow trickle of water, regular evaporation, the absence of currents of air—and then be prepared to wait about twenty thousand years." A longish wait! but after all, if we are not here to see the fruits of our efforts, it matters little whether they flourish two years or two million after our death. The medieval builders of cathedrals did not hope to see their finished work—but that did not prevent them from giving their best to it.

"Each age is a dream that is dying, or one that is coming to birth," wrote the poet Arthur O'Shaughnessy. And each generation must therefore build for a future it will never see. To us especially, who are imbued with the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, it must be clear that we are our brother's keepers—our unimagined brother of the year 4000 as well as our forgotten brother of today's slums. For our horizon is not limited by the here and now. The materialistic Communist cries out for a remedy, by violent revolution, of the undeniable ills of today; the cowardly reactionary excuses his smug indifference to them by expressing a hope for a better future; but it is our part to form of the two a glorious combination—succor for material needs while we induce heart and mind to look above them.

Photo by courtesy of Pix Publishing Co.

The Eucharistic Congress in Budapest drew thousands of pilgrims from all countries. Here is shown one of the altars erected. The years refer to the anniversary of St. Stephen.