

The Romanesque Period is the age of symbol and attitude. Here we have no vulgar descriptive realism. Here are facts nobly and powerfully stated in stone and metal. Here are artists wrapped around and enclosed in their civilization fashioning with great beauty the requirements and history of their times. How well the carvings at Parma and the bronze doors at Pisa show this. We are given chapter and verse of Scripture and legend represented, revealing the problems which originally confronted the artist, together with the author's assessment and ascription. This is the main value of the book and it is done with a patient labour which can be born only of a profound love of the subject. At times one could wish for an occasional flash of that intuitive understanding which can so vividly interpret a work for another age and generation. However, here is a very great deal of information most aptly illustrated, a valuable addition to most libraries for the use of the historian, the artist, who too often today sadly neglects scholarship, and the determined and courageous amateur.

MAURICE PERCIVAL

MANTEGNA. By E. Tietze-Conrat. (Phaidon Press; 2 gns.).

A new volume devoted to Mantegna is most welcome. The excellent selection of plates in the present work is enriched by the inclusion of fine previously unpublished details of the Palazzo Ducale ceiling, and the text is admirably equipped with a closely reasoned scholarly catalogue of the artist's work.

Mantegna is an artist who can be interpreted afresh for each generation, and it is to be regretted that E. Tietze-Conrat's critique fails to realize this opportunity, and does not fully communicate the impact of the artist upon the author. All too briefly, references to the archaeological picnic, the visit to Poretta, or the quotations from Mantegna's letters to his patrons bring him closer to the reader. His archaeological researches penetrate every aspect of his art, yet the relationship between observed fact and the free play of the imagination in his treatment of antique remains is hardly discussed. Mantegna's luminous classical ruins, magnificently encrusted with reliefs, form the calm centre in the vortex of his artistic passion; provide the key to his harsh unyielding surfaces, the wiry resilient foliage, the brittle convolutions of rock and drapery, the leathery flesh, which are such constant features of his vision. Only in the ideal human forms, such as the Louvre 'St Sebastian', is a complete identity attained between the person and ideal fragments, while the rugged visages of the archers, the fantastic landscape, the thrusting weeds, suggest the eternal tension of life. The same principle underlies the Brera 'Deposition' where the tonal transitions of the

dead Christ's forms, contrasted with the mourners' furrowed tear-stained heads, establishes the power and majesty of the Slain God: a quality which, apart from the lower technical skill in the New York version, makes the author's claim that the latter was the model for the Brera picture doubtful.

It is her analysis of Mantegna's relation to his precursors and youthful contemporaries which is most valuable and she rightly stresses his quest for independence, relating it to his departure for Mantua. Thus he developed an intensely personal solution of the problems of form, texture, space and composition. So absolute was his achievement of freedom, that he alone among his contemporaries could successfully attempt the programmes devised at the behest of that formidable Renaissance blue-stocking, Isabella D'Este, without sacrificing his autonomy.

He was above all a man of his epoch, saying his prayers to 'the Divine Thunderer and his most glorious Mother' with no sense of mockery. But even if the author sometimes fails to evoke the spirit of the period, nevertheless this is a book which students of Renaissance art should certainly possess.

MARIA SHIRLEY

SAINT ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY. By Nesta de Robeck. (Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee; \$3.00.)

At last a life of St Elizabeth of Hungary has been written in English. Nesta de Robeck has written it, and that in itself speaks for the excellence of the book. Strangely enough, for surely she is one of the most attractive of saints, St Elizabeth is not well known in this country. One legend, however, has captured the imagination. This tells how Elizabeth, a Princess of Hungary, already married at the age of fourteen to Ludwig, Landgraf of Thuringia, was one winter's day taking a load of bread to the starving poor during a time of famine. Her husband, riding homewards, met her and her two girl companions unexpectedly. Wondering to see his wife so heavily laden, Ludwig dismounted and lifted a corner of the cloak covering the hamper. The bread had been miraculously changed into a fragrant mass of red and white roses. Ludwig exclaimed: 'What! roses at this time of the year!' Elizabeth replied, 'They aren't roses, they are loaves.' Then she too looked into the hamper and saw the flowers. Ludwig was not annoyed. He understood and let her pass on her way.

This legend gives the keynote. The marriage of Elizabeth and Ludwig was founded on love and trust. She had been happy as a child. Miss de Robeck gives a delightful picture of her early days in the old castle of Wartburg, the home of her future husband's father