

Librarian of the Royal Malta Library, has devoted his scholarship and his unique knowledge of the records of the Knights to describing the Church of St John. After a short historical introduction covering the history of the Order from its foundation to the loss of Malta, Sir Hannibal describes the church and its works of art; first the church itself and then each of its side chapels, together with their treasures and monuments, the Oratory, the sacristy, the crypt, and the furniture of the church.

His treatment of the subject is characterized by a robust common-sense which is refreshing. For instance, when discussing various ingenious theories that have been put forward to account for the absence of an entablature and cornice, he observes that 'it is possible to suggest that Cassar adopted this arrangement because he liked the result'. Sir Hannibal has some interesting things to say about the problems raised by the building, and from his vast knowledge of his subject he has provided many matters of detail that were, perhaps, unknown to the majority of his readers.

Here is an exhaustive and detailed description of the great church, beautifully printed and lavishly illustrated (there are two plans and 760 illustrations, of which fifty are in colour). This is plainly a labour of love, a love that appears on almost every page of the book. Sir Hannibal Scicluna deserves well of his Island and of his Order; he also deserves, and will receive, the gratitude of all those into whose hands his admirable book may come.

GEOFFREY DE C. PARMITER

THE LIFE OF ROBERT SOUTHWELL. By Christopher Devlin, s.j. (Longmans; 21s.)

Blessed Robert Southwell was martyred at Tyburn on February 21, 1595 (though I cannot find the date in this book), at the early age of thirty-three. But into that short span were crowded as much incident and drama as can be found in many an octogenarian. He landed in England in July 1586, just before the discovery of the Babington plot that led to the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. Then in 1588 came the Armada. More than half the Elizabethan martyrs suffered during the decade he spent in England, and by his ministry and the power of his pen he was in the thick of the persecution. He wrote no autobiography such as John Gerard's or William Weston's, but he was a prolific letter-writer as well as a poet, and his graceful, sensitive prose brings these stirring days to life no less vividly, though more subtly, than the famous narratives of his confrères.

With sound scholarship, and with access to considerable new material, Fr Devlin has painted from the life a portrait of this gentle,

blithesome and courageous martyr-poet, and those who think that Jesuits are all turned out of one mould like toy soldiers should compare this life with those of Gerard and Weston. Fr Devlin's own distinguished prose, that is often so near to poetry, is the perfect medium for such a study. Wide reading has made the background almost as familiar to him as it was to Southwell, and his scholarship safeguards him from any excessive use of imagination. Particularly attractive is the unexpected, but always felicitous, interjection of lines from the martyr's own poems. Most of these chapters may be read with ease even by those unacquainted with the historical setting, but there are times when the very complexity of the situation necessitates close concentration. The intrigues of Morgan and Paget in the Babington plot, and the chapter on 'W.S.' are examples of passages that require and will repay more than one reading. But generally speaking the narrative progresses with clarity and mounting interest, through the troubles of the Roman College, the stress and strain of the English Mission, through the years of imprisonment and harrowing tortures till it reaches its climax in an account of his trial and execution that is as fine as anything to be found in the literature of the English Martyrs.

GODFREY ANSTRUTHER, O.P.

BORSTAL AND BETTER. By Richard Maxwell. (Hollis and Carter; 16s.)

'Is Borstal a success?' asks Mr Maxwell. 'Yes, if in the beginning a boy starts off with the right idea and makes the best of his opportunities.' This splendid platitude strikes the keynote for the book as a whole. Throughout the 216 pages of this 'autobiography of a criminal' the reader is reminded that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. The full *Cursus Honorum* is described—Remand Home, Approved School, Borstal and Prison—and if on reading this rather flat account of kindly policemen, gentlemanly governors and dreary institutional routines some may be led to inquire whether our penal system is properly so called, others will certainly ponder on the apparent absence of any spiritual sustenance for our large prison population. Mr Maxwell left Borstal in 1937. In 1948 he was still in Wandsworth Prison and one may be permitted to wonder whether the title is not misleading and whether in this case at least the sociologists are not right when they claim that the criminal's activities begin to slacken 'round about the age of 30'.

And yet, in spite of itself, the book bears witness to the 'Classical' age of Borstal between the two wars. An Act of Parliament of 1908 first makes mention of a 'Borstal' Institution but there was at that time little to differentiate it from a Boys' Prison. During Mr Maxwell's stay at the Feltham Institution the 'sporting Housemaster', the Chaplain, the