

tion. The last chapter quietly disposes, by implication, of the quaint fancies of those who imagine that More was ever suspected of Protestantism, but this chapter might well have been expanded. Scattered up and down our literature are references to More, which, if gathered together would show the continuity of his *cultus* and reputation. Thus the sturdy old recusant, William Blundell, wrote in his notebook about 1660:

A Colonel of Parliament told me that beyond the seas it is reported of England that it produced but one wise man in an age, and that the people gaze on him awhile as a monster, then cut off his head. 'So', said he, 'did they do by Sir Thomas More and the earl of Strafford.'

No greater praise can be given to this book than to say that it must now replace Fr Bridgett's as the standard life of More.

GODFREY ANSTRUTHER, O.P.

IN SARA'S TENTS. By Walter Starkie. (John Murray; 25s.)

One of the most puzzling things in the history of pilgrimages is the devotion of the Gipsies to St Sara, the black servant of the Maries Salome and Jacobi, who is venerated by them in the crypt of the saint's church at Les Saintes Maries de la Mer. The cult of these saints had been established for several centuries when the first Gipsies appeared in Western Europe, though the spurt given to it by the discovery of the holy women's relics in 1448 coincides roughly with their entrance into France. Sara can therefore hardly be an Oriental figure imported into the West by the newcomers. Yet she has little place in the Christian tradition and the Gipsies have made her their own, to such an extent that the homages paid her are suspect in the eyes of ecclesiastical authority and, it would seem, tolerated only because it is impossible to prevent them.

Professor Starkie goes as near explaining the mystery of her cult as is possible. His book is placed under the patronage of the swarthy virgin and the latter part of it contains a vivid account of the pilgrimage as he saw it in 1951, mingled with memories of earlier visits. But Sara's tents are not pitched only in the Camargue. The author finds them in the past and the present, in Spain and Hungary as well as Provence, and they are inhabited, not by types and anonyms, but by flesh-and-blood friends and acquaintances, with whom he is on terms of 'thee and thou' and whom he has known for many years and met, lost and met afresh in sundry lands. At least half the book is laid in Spain, and many pages are devoted to unravelling the perplexing relationship between native Spanish folklore and Gipsy importations, though even he confesses

that he is unable to ascertain the true origin of the name *canto flamenco*. Stern Hispanists frown on the art it denotes as something alien to the spirit of the Peninsula; but Professor Starkie seems to suggest that its sources may be Andalusian.

'The Romanichals, with their imitative powers, once they had absorbed the Andalusian style, began to transform it in accordance with their own temperament. There was, moreover, in their singing, playing or dancing a barbaric strength and intensity of expression which their audiences missed in their own race.'

Speculation and history are constantly mingled with personal narrative and the medley procession of characters who pass through these pages leaves one breathless. Personal experiences are not by any means confined to encounters with the sons of Romany and at one stage the author recalls his difficulties when he was sent to a hostile country as Britain's cultural ambassador at the most critical moment of the war. In fact, the work is an exhilarating mixture of autobiography, anthropology, musicology, dramatic presentation, short story and impressionist travel writing. With such varied ingredients, it is all the more admirable that the author never descends to the slipshod or the inaccurate.

C. M. GIRDLESTONE

PLEASURE OF RUINS. By Rose Macaulay. (Weidenfeld and Nicolson; 25s.)

This book has the most extraordinary and, I may say, tantalizing fascination. One would scarcely have supposed that four hundred and fifty pages about nothing but ruins would hold one enthralled from beginning to end, with curiosity, astonishment, but chiefly an incessant excited questioning, for there are as many avenues to speculation here as there are colonnades of broken columns presented to us from all over the world. Even at the hand of Miss Rose Macaulay this seems a considerable feat. 'To explore the various kinds of pleasure given to various people at various epochs by the spectacle of ruined buildings' is her expressed aim; she adds a little later, 'I fear this may seem to many a perverse book'. In pursuit of that pleasure and perversity, Miss Macaulay invites us, preserving meantime her own delightful civilized detachment, to contemplate ruin after ruin, without monotony, providing us with the comments of earlier visitors of different periods, intoxicated, mournful, complacent, banal, holding the whole thing together with her fine and witty prose, and supplying the reader by way of illustration with the charm of eighteenth and early nineteenth century engravings of ruins.

It appears uniformly cultured and sober, and perhaps it is just perversity to complain of this; but I am reminded of the Old Person of