

THE BASILICA OF ST PETER. By Paul Letarouilly. (Tiranti; 25s.)

The measured drawings of Paul Letarouilly are at once a standard item in the cultural baggage of the later nineteenth century and a monument, in the strict sense of the word, of Renaissance beliefs and perceptions. Original copies of 'La Basilique de Saint Pierre'—their pages suspiciously fresh and clean and their spines revealingly rotten—are certainly to be found in the bottom shelves of most older Catholic libraries. As visual records of architectural performance, measured drawings have one great drawback in that the contour of the smallest feature must be given approximately equal weight with that of the largest. The result therefore is a lace-like *tour-de-force* which has a compelling charm of its own but which grossly belies the *effect* of the building delineated.

But in order to appreciate measured drawing—and indeed in order to appreciate the architectural system which called it into being—it is important to remember that a building was conceived as a thing of the mind, as a complete whole which had been devised down to its smallest details and which was in some measure independent of the materials it was made of and the uses to which it was put. It will be seen that a measured drawing does capture more of the essence of this kind of thing than appearances might suggest.

This well produced and defiant little book gives a copious record of the present basilica, but also ventures daring reconstructions of the buildings which have occupied the site before and records the many projects for the Renaissance basilica which were never carried out. These last are encouraging to the devout Catholic: for they show him Providence at work preventing the completion of the new church until such time as technique could rise adequately to the occasion.

LANCE WRIGHT

THE WINGED LIFE. A Portrait of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. By Richard Rumbold and Lady Margaret Stewart. (Weidenfeld and Nicholson; 16s.)

Confined, as most of us are, to lives that are deadened by the monotony of safety, the career and personality of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry makes an obvious appeal. He played with life. The fantasies which most people, sufficiently alive to invent them, are forced to renounce at sixteen, he was able to retain almost until the day of his mysterious disappearance on a flight in the summer of 1944. His myths about the world, which he made in his own engaging if not impeccable image, were always spared the criticism of the prolonged experience of mere land-lubbers through his engagement in a life of action which led him miles above the trees and houses into the unexplored dimension of the