

THE WHITE RABBIT. By Bruce Marshall. (Evans Bros.; 16s.)

This is not a book for those whose stomachs are easily turned. Here we have a description which presumably leaves nothing unrecorded of the horrors of Gestapo tortures, of Buchenwald's iniquity and despair. Yet it is a horror which fascinates as one marvels to think that the White Rabbit (Secret Service code-name for Wing Commander F. F. E. Yeo-Thomas, G.C., M.C.) survived such tortures and hardships to entrust the telling of his tale to Bruce Marshall. The pattern of this tale is already familiar to the many who know the story of Odette Sanson; her work with the French Resistance was directed by an organisation parallel to that served by Yeo-Thomas. There are the parachute landings in France, the use of aliases, the risks run for the sake of loyalty to colleagues in the Resistance, the inevitable capture by the Gestapo, the attempts to escape, the concentration camp, the successful escape in the hour of victory from slow strangulation and the return home which causes Yeo-Thomas's father to remark: 'My son has returned, but he looks like an old man of seventy'. Bruce Marshall has done justice to his friend's record of indomitable courage, heroic endurance and inspiring patriotism, and yet when the book ends one is left wondering what the hero of this story makes of it: the problems of this account lie at the depth of human experience and one would like to know the complete outlook of the man who encountered them in such a striking fashion. But perhaps this is asking too much. At least this book has satisfied the right of the many to know what was suffered for them by the few.

STANISLAUS PARKER, O.P.

AMPLEFORTH AND ITS ORIGINS. Edited by Abbot Justin McCann and Columba Cary-Elwes, O.S.B. (Burns Oates; 22s. 6d.)

Last Easter Ampleforth celebrated its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, and to mark the event a volume of essays written 'by Members of the Ampleforth Community' appeared. The essays are carefully planned and dovetailed: they are best read in the order which they are published. Appropriately enough, therefore, the volume opens with an essay by the present Abbot on 'Saint Benedict and his Spirit' and acts, as it were, as a point of departure for others to tell of the growth of the Benedictine Order—especially in England. There are some fairly general essays on 'The Coming of Saint Augustine', Medieval and Tudor Westminster, and separate and detailed studies of Archbishop Gifford, Father Augustine Baker and Blessed Alban Roe. Then comes the history of the school itself in two parts: a study of its rise shortly after 1800 as 'a College . . . for the purpose of bringing up Youth to a Religious Life, and qualifying them for the discharge of Ministerial Functions' until 1812 when 'a limited number of young

gentlemen not designed for that state' were admitted. The next few years were a case of rise and fall, but by 1870 the number of boys stood at ninety-seven and thereafter has increased steadily, the current figure being over five hundred. Of 'Modern Ampleforth' Father Paul Nevill writes paying noble tributes to his predecessors, but giving scarcely a hint of his own most vast contribution to the school. One hopes that in the tradition of fairness some estimate of that contribution will be made at Ampleforth's two hundredth anniversary. In the meantime it is pleasing to find the Editors not attempting to make out that Ampleforth is the Catholic Eton of the North, but that it is 'primarily a Catholic and monastic school'; for that is a comment which could do with the widest circulation in Catholic circles, as indeed could their most apt concluding generalisation that 'if ever the monastic spirit left a monastic school, then that school would cease to fulfil its function'. Ampleforth, like any other Catholic school, does not so much offer a superior or an inferior form of education to its non-Catholic contemporaries as something which (in the widest Catholic sense) is quite different.

NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE

THE ILLIAD OF HOMER. Translated with an Introduction by Richmond Lattimore. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 25s.)

There probably never will be, or should be, an end to new translations of Homer unless and until we pass into complete barbarism. And they seem to abound particularly in our age, which can never produce a single standard translation which will satisfy all men of taste among our contemporaries because there is no longer any community of taste or any agreed literary convention, and furthermore there is no agreement among educated men (or even among classical scholars) on the right attitude to adopt to classical antiquity. This of course makes things very difficult for the translator; and Professor Lattimore's translation, though praiseworthy in many ways, does not surmount the difficulties. The metre he adopts is what he calls a 'free six-beat line' which reads to me like a rather unhappy compromise between verse and prose and certainly does nothing to suggest the speed and splendour of sound of the Homeric hexameter (the translator makes it run considerably better in the descriptions of fighting than in the speeches, where it is often extraordinarily lame). And the language, though it is neither mean nor unduly archaic, and that is a great deal, does too often (again especially in the speeches) wobble uncertainly between classical translators' jargon and colloquialism.

The translation is preceded by fifty-four pages of introduction, which seems to me (who am anything but a Homeric specialist) an excellent piece of intelligent popularisation.

A.H.A.