

THE DANGEROUS QUEEN by Francis Edwards, S.J., *Geoffrey Chapman 42s.*

Like the burn endlessly cascading down a Scottish mountain side the stream of books on the Queen of Scots has been pouring from the printing presses of Europe for nearly four centuries. Nor is there any likelihood that this stream will ever dry up. There is certainly room for yet another book on the controversial Queen of Scots when it is of the quality of this scholarly study.

The choice of François Clouet's portrait of Mary as a frontispiece is most effective (the dust jacket, too, is particularly striking). It is worthwhile to look at the Clouet portrait from time to time in reading this book so provocatively entitled 'The Dangerous Queen': a description taken by the author from Sir William Cecil's memorandum for Queen Elizabeth, October 1569, 'The Queen of Scots, indeed, is and always shall be a dangerous person'.

The Ridolphi plot to bring about the marriage of the captive Scottish Queen to the Duke of Norfolk

and the usurpation of Elizabeth's throne is by no means an easy subject, with its undertones of espionage and intrigue. Father Edwards makes it seem easy. Roberto Ridolphi, the astute Florentine merchant-banker, sweeps through the book intriguing in true machiavellian style in the Catholic courts of Europe. The dupes of his high-flown schemes were doomed. The author has caught this renaissance character admirably. He has assembled an impressive array of contemporary evidence and through a very personal and colourful style turns it into a fascinating story which vividly evokes this dramatic moment and turning point in English history. The Ridolphi plot failed. The Duke of Norfolk was executed. The destiny of the Queen of Scots, who denied all knowledge of Ridolphi's plot, pursued its sad course towards the executioner's axe at Fotheringhay. But that is another and more tragic story.

*Kieran Mulvey, O.P.*

SMALL SOCIAL GROUPS IN ENGLAND by Margaret Phillips, *Methuen 25s.*

One of the major limitations of group analyses carried out by social psychologists has been the attention to experimental situations rather than to groups already in existence. The particular significance of Margaret Phillips's book lies in its concern with ordinary groups in their normal social context and in the desire to make what is known about the operation of such groups available to the general reader.

Using material provided by a considerable number of observers throughout the country, she considers a wide variety of groups, from the Women's Institute to life in a bell-tent, from nuns to a tank crew; from these accounts the author derives some general propositions about the working of groups, building these up throughout the book. The idea behind this investigation is a valuable and enlightening one, but the weakness lies in using accounts produced by untrained observers.

Some descriptions are unduly naïve and lengthy (one wonders why there has not been more editing of the lengthier passages) and are characterized by the indiscriminating attention to detail which denotes the observer who does not know what he is looking for. Several accounts give no more insight than an official brochure and provide unwelcome ammunition for those who believe that social scientists are concerned with the laborious analysis of the obvious.

The author's approach is, however, unusual and one which is likely to prove most helpful for those who want to know more about the everyday working of groups without verbiage or pretension. The selective annotation and bibliography is also useful in this context. Basically a psychological study, it is complemented by a sociological footnote contributed by Bryan Wilson.

*Joan Brothers*