

A HISTORY OF THE ORDER OF ST JOHN OF JERUSALEM IN WALES. By William Rees. (Cardiff U. P.; 15s.)

This is an admirable book, admirably conceived and admirably executed. It was the happy thought of the 'Council for the Priory of Wales' to celebrate the conclusion of the late war by commissioning a history of their predecessors in medieval Wales, the famous Order of St John of Jerusalem. This is precisely the type of enterprise which chartered bodies and institutions should undertake, and the Council was fortunate in being able to secure so distinguished a scholar as Professor Rees to write the book. The result has been that comparatively rare thing, a book which is both a work of exact and rigorous scholarship and at the same time one which should delight the heart of any reasonably intelligent reader. The historical background has been sketched in broad outline, and there are, as was to be expected in a book by Professor Rees, five good maps. The illustrations illustrate and adorn and a full glossary of terms smoothes the way for the general reader.

Three points of minor interest may be commented upon. It is interesting to discover the word *ferculum* meaning 'one whole dish' (page 21). I wonder why Professor Rees uses the form 'Mynydd St John' in the map on page 70: the ordnance survey says 'Mynydd Sant Ioan'. And why should he prefer 'Hatherley' on page 91 to 'Habberley'? To one untutored ear at any rate 'Edward Mytton of Hatherley' sounds odd.

Finally, it may be remarked that to produce a book of this type for a paltry fifteen shillings is a notable achievement.

T. CHARLES EDWARDS

THE SHORT STORY. By Sean O'Faolain. (Collins; 10s. 6d.)

Mr O'Faolain has several qualifications which should have made his study of the short story a notable piece of writing. He is himself a distinguished writer of short stories, he has a healthy disregard for literary prejudices and he has a wide acquaintance with French and Russian writers. Unfortunately the gift of judgment seems to be denied him, and his book—full as it is of brilliant starts—is a restless, inconclusive essay. He gives eight examples, from Daudet to Ernest Hemingway, and these will at least be a consolation to those who grow weary of his 'young man at the Literary Institute' who 'wants to write'. Indeed Mr O'Faolain as a theorist is not very helpful: he has *solvitur scribendo* as a sub-title for his section on 'The Technical Struggle', but it takes him seventy pages to say so. But then, he thinks that 'technique' is 'the least part of the business'. What matters are 'punch and poetry', and it has to be admitted that these are qualities Mr O'Faolain understands very well. Happily they will not be denied, even in the most rambling passages of the book, and their presence in the fair copies included is faithfully observed.

I. E.