

REVIEWS

MISCELLANEOUS

ART AND A CHANGING CIVILIZATION. By Eric Gill. Twentieth Century Library, No. 8. (John Lane, The Bodley Head; 2/6 net.)

MONEY AND MORALS. By Eric Gill. With nine illustrations by Denis Tegetmeier. (Faber and Faber; 6/- net.)

Art is not a technical treatise on aesthetics in a narrow sense of the word; Mr. Gill discusses the nature and the place of art, *de jure* and *de facto*, in the general scheme of things: in proper perspective the question is seen to be one of ethics. Everything that is made by man ought to be a work of art, every creative act must have its logos in the mind of the creator, the workman must be responsible because rational. A society in which most things are made by machines ministered to by workmen irresponsible in respect of the product while the artist lives in a rarefied atmosphere apart is not a healthy society: art is doomed to suffer the effect of rarefaction, unreality, the museum; man is doomed to decay of the personality, at least to discontinuity, to being a man only in his leisure time. This is the burden of the book; its importance cannot be overstressed. One may find much to disagree with in Mr. Gill's presentation of the history of the rise of commercialism (his sharp contrast between other ages and our own), or with his economic arguments (that machinery necessarily causes unemployment, for example, or that banking is necessarily usury); such disagreement would be secondary; it would not affect the main issue of the book. Again, difficulty in accepting some of the author's statements about art may arise from the fact that terms are not at once explained: skill is distinguished against technical dexterity, so that 'well painted' does not mean 'painted with dexterity,' but includes the activity of the creative mind, for it is when hand is divorced from mind that the hand ceases to be creative, the work to be human. Of the ill effects of the dichotomy upon the artist, as the word is now understood, Baudelaire, discussed by Mr. Tunnell in the second Appendix, is an illustration. When a society expresses itself in subjectivist art, if one cannot conclude that there is anything wrong with the art one must certainly conclude that there is something wrong with the society.

It is difficult to see why the precious written Appendix I was included.

In *Money and Morals* (the book includes also *The Politics of Industrialism* and *Men and Things, and Things of Stone*), it is the incompatibility of the present economic state of affairs with Christianity which is primarily discussed: you cannot be a Christian if you cannot be a responsible human being; the present state of affairs, therefore, tends to make the Christian life in-

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psychologists, sociologists, politicians, etc., are deliberately or at least effectively attacking. *G.K.'s* will be found to have a spilth of paradox—because the attack has a spilth of absurdity. For example, we might give utterance to the aim of *G.K.'s* in the proverb, 'The home is the social defence of freedom; and the homestead is the economic defence of the home.' But because each clause in this almost self-evident proverb is disputed, we may change the proverb into a seeming paradox: 'The man who has nothing to defend has nothing for self-defence'—or again, to give it a more startling form, 'A man is mostly defended by what he has to defend.'

But it is not the paradox alone that *G.K.'s* has used to defend the essentials of human liberty and life. Perhaps because the word *home* has carried the poetry of the English language throughout the world, these defenders of the Home have been English of the English in their weapons of defence. Nothing is more national in Shakespeare than his creation of Sir John Falstaff. But many of the national poet's admirers have to be told that in creating the great burly lecherous clown of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Shakespeare was laughing out of court the new thing in religion.

The little group of 'poor servants of literature' who, in their love of England, tried to undo in Essex Street what was being done in Whitehall, were brothers of him who made the playhouse at Blackfriars a last line of defence against the new invasion of England. Contrasted with the Essex Street group who fought against still greater forces, the other English satirists may one day seem of lesser importance. The genius who gave us *Gulliver's Travels* and the *Tale of a Tub*—the hardly lesser genius who enriched our literature with the *Book of Snobs*—and the *Sorrows of Werther*—gave English satire its right to sit with the immortals. But the things they defended—perhaps over-defended—were so little in comparison with the great battlings of *G.K.'s* that the Essex Street group may one day be given a higher place in the history—if not in the literature—of England whom they served with their pen and with their poverty.

VINCENT McNABB, O.P.

THE MENACE TO OUR NATIONAL DEFENCE. By Sir Norman Angell. (Hamish Hamilton; 3/6.)

The recent set-backs to projects of disarmament and the present tension of international relations should set many Englishmen reading and considering this lucid treatise. Our national security, once assured by sea-power, is now threatened from the air. If we want peace above everything, we can of course refuse to defend our national integrity, but no responsible statesman,