

Fortunately the main part of the book is of another order, dealing as it does with agriculture in general, of which Sir George knows a great deal, and in particular with grassland and ley-farming, on which he is our greatest living authority. His approach to the countryside is less traditional and humane than that of Mr. Massingham, but it is all the more interesting to see in how many respects he has come to join what may be called the Massingham party. Especially noteworthy is his defence of the small farm, which he describes as 'an absolute necessity to the stability of rural England.'

But Sir George's most characteristic contribution to these matters is his urgent and documented protest against the waste of agricultural land—in the first place through the encroachment of public and private building (since 1927, about 60,000 acres a year), in the second place through the assignment of more than half our land surface to permanent grass or to rough and hill grazings—a practice which though long customary runs really counter to the principles of good husbandry, since it implies a continual decrease in energy and fertility which might obviously be remedied by applying to grass the same rotational ploughing and the same concern for improved strains which are given to other crops. The details of the technique involved are Sir George's speciality, and the zeal with which he has preached and practised them has won him an honourable place in the records of British agriculture.

W.S.

SAINT THOMAS AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL. By Jacques Maritain. (Marquette University Press; n.p.)

M. Maritain in these 'Aquinas Lectures' to Marquette University disclaims any attempt to summarise all that St. Thomas had to say about the problem of evil. He confines himself to two points—'the meaning of the existence of evil in this world; and the cause of evil where free will is concerned.' As is perhaps inevitable in the thankless task of rendering the highest achievements of metaphysics intelligible to the moderns, the result will perhaps disappoint both those who are acquainted with the lapidary conciseness of the original and those who expect a restatement in the concrete terms of common sense and common parlance. The presentation of St. Thomas's thought regarding the 'privative' character of evil would possibly have been more convincing had M. Maritain availed himself of the simple English word *badness* (as the equivalent of *malum formale*), whose absence in Latin and other less happier tongues has been the cause of so much misunderstanding. And is not M. Maritain doing less than justice to the profundity of St. Thomas's thought when, on p. 18 (at least by implication), he credits evil itself with finality? Evil *as such* is for St. Thomas utterly purposeless; the purpose is to be attributed solely to the (actual or potential) *bonum conjunctum*.

The second half of the lecture is devoted wholly to St. Thomas's

profound and subtle thought concerning the origin of sin as *causa deficiens*. One had supposed this was a commonplace to all Thomists, whether 'High' or 'Low.' A reviewer in the *Dublin Review* shows this to be a mistake (this doctrine is surely *presupposed* to the *voluntas permittendi* of a Garrigou-Lagrange and to the whole controversy?). It is good to have the matter set out so clearly, and with the collection of relevant texts which are added in an appendix.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

DAVID. By Duff Cooper. (Cape; 10s. 6d.).

Mr. Duff Cooper retells the Bible story of King David in modern idiom, reconstructing motives and settings omitted or merely hinted at in the original. But he has taken certain liberties with the text which believing readers will hardly like, as when Samuel is presented as a crafty and fanatical schemer, while David in his actions and judgements is credited with a remarkable political subtlety and even with ideas foreign to his time. Was he really 'burning with a desire for progress'?

The author professes to hold the mean between the fundamentalists and the higher critics: David is no monotheist, and ordinary Israelites would be puzzled to explain the difference between the Ark of the Lord and the Lord himself. In short, there is a general toning-down of the supernatural. Yet the book is pleasantly written, though hardly doing justice to the vitality of its hero.

C.B.D.

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