

## REVIEWS

of Bruges, summarises the latest information on the subject, with a discussion of its moral bearings. This handy volume is published with the *imprimatur* of the Cardinal of New York. The latter book is more guarded than the former on the medical issue, but both are agreed on the moral issue.

T.G.

## ART

ΔΟΜΗΝΙΚΟΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ ΚΡΗΣ. By Achilleus Kyrou. (Athens, 1932).

Because of its linguistic inaccessibility, the work of Greek students of El Greco receives generally insufficient recognition. M. Kyrou, a Greek authority on the painter, has recently been conducting researches in Crete with the object of augmenting where possible our knowledge of his early life. He has not, it must be confessed, succeeded in unearthing any important biographical fact, but he has all the same provided us with sufficient data to make a plausible reconstruction of Greco's early life possible. I understand that he is on the point of publishing further documentary evidence in support of the more hypothetical of his contentions.

Assuming the old identification of Theotocopulos with Theotokis, M. Kyrou claims as Greco's birthplace the old house of the Theotokis family, which he has located in the Arconticò of the village of Fodele. He has further discovered a legend to the effect that 'un jeune Theotokis avait quitté, il y a bien longtemps, son pays et qu'il n'était jamais revenu, ayant trouvé au loin gloire et fortune. Vers la fin seulement de la vie, se rappelant de sa famille, il avait fait venir près de lui un vieux frère, qui vivait encore et avec lequel il partagea gloire et richesses.' That this is not a product of the Cretan Greco cult inaugurated by the researches immediately before the war of the Spanish consul in Candia, is proved by the somewhat similar version of the story retailed by Stamakis, the centenarian revolutionary, who had died some twelve years previously. There is therefore no inherent improbability in M. Kyrou's suggestion that the frescoes (at present covered with whitewash) in the church on the former site of the village, which was moved two hundred years or so ago owing to Turkish inroads, may contain further clues as to the Byzantine aspects of Greco's development and that the neighbouring monastery of St. Pandeimon was almost certainly the scene of his first lessons in painting. It would be interesting, too, to know the precise extent of the relationship between the *Agony in the Garden* and the icon of the same subject in the church of St. Catherine in Candia.

At the same time, however, M. Kyrou is inclined to follow the fashionable tendency to overestimate the part played by the Greek elements of Greco's work and fails to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of why, if Greco on his arrival in Venice was already an accomplished painter of icons (and the Cook *Purification of the Temple* seems to show that he was not yet an accomplished painter of anything), there is relatively little trace of Byzantine influences in his early work. The problem is not as simple as Byzantinists would have us suppose. What of the Bassano influence, of which M. Kyrou makes so little? What of the Prado *Trinity* (at which M. Kyrou shares Mr. Rutter's rather naive surprise) with its superficial Michaelanegesque quality and its structure copied from a Dürer woodcut? Above all, what of the portraiture with which no one has yet dealt adequately? So much of Greco's painting cannot be explained by references to the Apostle St. Luke that to neglect the work of Willumsen and particularly of Venturi (in *La Formacion del Estilo del Greco*) is to ignore the more feasible line of approach.

It is from one point of view regrettable that the book which M. Kyrou has based on his valuable researches should take the form of romanticised biography rather than of critical art-history. The facts of Greco's early life as he reconstructs them are more credible than his reconstructed personality, and his excessively subjective biographical method is apt to obscure the very real objective value of much of his work. His attempt, for example, to set Greco in his setting at St. Pandeileimon is not on the whole assisted by the interpolation of conversations like this :

—Ἐρχεσαι μαζί μας μικρέ, νὰ σὲ μάθουμε τὴν τέχνη, ποὺ τόσο φαίνεται νὰ σοῦ ἀρέση; τοῦ εἶπε ὁ καλόγερος.

Ἄ Δομήνικος ζαφνιασθηκε καὶ ἐκύτταξε μὲ προσοχὴ τὸν ἱερωμένο.  
Ἄ Όλα τὰ παιδικὰ του ὄνειρα ἐζύπνησαν πάλι μέσα του.

—Ναὶ Παπούλη, ἔρχομαι, εἶπε μὲ σοβαρὸ τόνο, σὰν νὰ καταλάβαινε οὐκ εἰδίελεγε τὴν στιγμή ἐκείνη τὸν δρόμο ποὺ θὰ ἔπαιρνε ἡ ζωὴ του ὀλόκληρη.

while the scene in Titian's studio becomes similarly a little ridiculous. But against this we must set the important emphasis which he lays on the obvious psychological effects of the known facts of Greco's life, the admirable contrast, for instance, between the austere religious outlook with which in Fodele and Candia he must have been inculcated and the sensuous materialism of the Venice into which he was precipitated—always assuming him, of course, the Wilhelm Meister-cum-Hamlet that M. Kyrou imagines him to have been. The book indeed is first-rate of its kind; M. Kyrou makes of Greco's character a consistent whole and sets him infallibly in his correct environment,

## REVIEWS

giving his imagination free but rational play in stopping up the innumerable factual gaps in his career. There is a good bibliography (in which the work of Cedillo, Waterhouse, and Miss de Gué Trapier receives no mention), but unfortunately no index.

J.P.-H.

**ARTISTS AT WORK.** By Stanley Casson. (Harrap; 5/-)

In an attempt to popularise art and extend its appreciation, the B.B.C. last autumn hit on the unhappy notion of organising a series of discussions, confined nominally to matters of technique, but straying with peculiar persistence towards elementary aesthetics, between Mr. Stanley Casson and four prominent artists, Mr. Frank Dobson and Mr. Henry Rushbury, the choice of whom was unexceptionable, Mr. Albert Rutherston and Mr. Edward Halliday. Architecture, it was considered, might safely be omitted. The form the discussion took was of a series of questions put by Mr. Casson, answered by the four artists and reiterated, again by Mr. Casson, in a Foreword and Summary. In *Artists at Work* these talks are reproduced verbatim, and the book consequently contains technical explanations by the artists of their methods which are of the highest interest and importance for potential students of their work.

The principles on which Mr. Casson bases his cross-examination are three :

(i) ' It is important to establish the fact that art cannot be considered separately from ordinary daily life, and that the mere act of living presupposes an appreciation of art in every man ' (p. 13).

(ii) ' Whatever an artist says about art has more potential value, if he be a good artist, than anything said by anyone else ' (p. 25).

(iii) ' If art is worth talking about at all, it is worth talking about in everyday language ' (p. 133).

He objects to what he considers the divorce of art from life, and supports his objections with facetious jibes at what he chooses to think the obscurantism of the modern critic. For a criticism based on specialised knowledge he attempts to substitute an approach founded on the quality that Mr. Kaines-Smith has lately disarmingly termed common-sense.

Where does this common-sense lead us in the case, first of all, of the last of his three principles? Mr. Dobson, explaining why he finds his own source of inspiration in the human form, says : ' When you use the human form you are using something