

of the present day is to be sought in co-operative effort on a regional basis rather than in so-called reforms imposed from above by a group of politicians and technical experts called, generally by way of euphemism, "The State." The author makes a useful attack on our present deplorable habit of "thinking in cartoons" and maintains—for which our best thanks are due to him—that "politics like charity should begin at home." Chapters II and III are valuable.

The great defect of the book is that the author believes that "the essential revolution is over." As those Catholics who have read *Quadragesimo Anno* know, it is in reality only just beginning, and in England even that can scarcely be said as yet. Mr. Thorpe does not appear to realize that, as society is to-day organized in this country, the excellent activities of himself and his friends will only be allowed in comparatively unessential matters. Let him once get down to his co-operative regional politics and he will be surprised at the well-organized and almost insuperable opposition with which he will be met. He sees that those standards of decency, of local responsibility and freedom are to-day increasingly menaced by the state. But he does not realize that this new servile state, which he rightly dislikes, is the inevitable counterpart of the contemporary economic structure of society which is in its turn firmly based on a thoroughly vicious social philosophy. And it will take a great deal more than countryside wardens and litter clubs to settle the matter.

Lastly, it is instructive to compare this book with a book of the same size from Ireland, *Economics for Ourselves* by An Gobàn Saor (Talbot Press).

T. CHARLES-EDWARDS.

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL. By T. S. Eliot. (Faber & Faber; 5/-.)

As a play, this seems to me a success. The sense of expectancy and foreboding given by the first chorus and kept as an undertone afterwards, the contrasts of character and motive in the actors, the vividness of particular scenes, are admirably achieved; there is the psychological treatment which a modern expects—for instance in the episode of the four tempters—but it is economical, and does not disturb the general swiftness of movement or the directness of the whole. I think the finest thing in the play is the opening of the second part, where three priests enter with banners of St. Stephen, St. John and the Holy Innocents and recall the feast and introit of each in turn; then pause to ask:

To-day, what is to-day? For the day is half-gone . . .

before the entrance of the four knights. This is so dramatic a use of liturgical material that one is surprised to see the Archbishop's Christmas sermon lose something of its relevance by the use in

the text of the translation "Peace, good will toward men" instead of the traditional and historic "Peace to men of good will."

The verse of the play has been praised as being of Mr. Eliot's best. I agree that the style is more consistent than in his earlier work, and that it is free from certain weaknesses common in more conventional poets. But I have never felt that Mr. Eliot is a positive poet of importance, nor do I feel so now. In saying this I understand that I owe some explanation to many admirers of Mr. Eliot whose intelligence I respect.

I think that the verse of Mr. Eliot and of younger men such as Messrs. Auden and Spender has been praised by many critics—in particular by some who are less actively interested in poetry than in the other arts—not because of its particular qualities but because such verse seems to form part of a general modern movement with which these critics are in sympathy; another instance of the fallacy of the *Zeitgeist*. No one supposes that English sculpture reached its height in the time of Shakespeare or that the greatest German poets were contemporary with Bach and Handel; and it is at least possible *a priori* that the post-War period should have produced architecture and sculpture and painting of the first class without producing poetry of the same class or even of any class.

By what qualities is modern verse recommended to its enthusiasts? In content, by its preoccupation with contemporary problems (theological for Mr. Eliot, social and political for the younger school); in form, by freedom of metre, use of the words and rhythms of common speech, avoidance of a "literary" vocabulary. I have not time to discuss how the appeal of such verse really differs from the appeal of other arts; enough to say that some of the critics who are most anxious that the plastic arts should have no content at all seem to expect that verse should have not only a content, but a didactic content. It is assumed that the ostensible subject-matter of literature is in itself a criterion of value, e.g., that a poem advertising communism or decrying the public-school system has an initial advantage over the war sonnets of a conventional Rupert Brooke. This is a strange return to the Victorian confusion of art and opinions, and will lead to the condemnation of *Pride and Prejudice* because Miss Austen was apparently indifferent to the Napoleonic wars and the Industrial Revolution. I believe that Mr. Rutland Boughton has recently anathematized the Elizabethan song-writers as being unconscious of the social miseries of their time.

On the formal side modern verse has little real novelty. There are many kinds of metrical freedom; free verse in the ordinary sense was (as far as I remember) first used by Traherne in English and afterwards by Blake (e.g., in the *Marriage of Heaven and*

*Hell*). It needs more technique than perhaps it is worth if it is to distinguish itself from rhythmical prose (a respectable medium) and to blend the more free with the more regular lines. In Mr. Eliot's play the freer lines read pleasantly, but when well-defined rhythms (anapaests or iambics) appear, they seem either too violent or too weak by contrast, e.g.—

To the small folk drawn into the pattern of fate, the small  
folk who live among small things,  
The strain on the brain of the small folk who stand to the  
doom of the house, the doom of their lord, the doom  
of the world . . .

and

Thirty years ago, I searched all the ways  
That lead to pleasure, advancement and praise.  
Delight in sense, in learning and in thought,  
Music and philosophy, curiosity,  
The purple bullfinch in the lilac tree,  
The tiltyard skill, the strategy of chess,  
Love in the garden, singing to the instrument  
Were all things equally desirable . . .

As for the reaction from "literary" English to the words and rhythms of common speech, it is merely the most recent of many such reactions, reaching over centuries, and it is not the most successful. Its adoption frees the writer from the particular absurdity of such lines as

Who foremost now delight to cleave  
With pliant arms thy glassy wave?

But it brings responsibilities too. Common speech is sometimes simpler, sometimes less simple than the literary language. It is often less precise. How far is the writer to compromise, or shall he present the living speech whole and entire as the Academician presents the trousers and buttons of his client upon the canvas? The phrase "all's well" is now literary, but is its spoken equivalent "everything's all right" really more serviceable? In practice each generation makes its own compromise, and dates itself accordingly. Housman is now considered a supremely literary writer, but at the beginning of the century Flecker was writing of him: "He has used pure spoken English with hardly any admixture of poetic verbiage." One thinks of the early Masfield, and of Rupert Brooke—

I dreamt I was in love again  
With the One Before the Last . . .

(a poem which has a good moral in this connexion). Mr. Eliot also has his own compromise, and it seems to me a weakness that he often uses a conversational word not because it is good in

itself but in order to tone down a literary word in the vicinity, e.g.—

Archbishop, secure and assured of your fate, unaffrayed  
among the shades, do you realize what you ask, do you  
realize what it means . . .

where "realize" is presumably meant to cancel out with "unaffrayed," though to me both words remain as they were, equally disagreeable.

I cannot expect that these criticism will convince those who do not think with me already; I hope I have at least defined my own view. I do not think that modern poets should return to the Georgian style, but that the best of the Georgians have left after them a little permanent verse; and that Mr. Eliot, a better dramatist than Flecker and a better critic than Brooke, has yet been unable to crystallize with the same success the intellectual position which he holds with distinction.

W. H. SHEWRING.

#### MEDIÆVAL STUDIES

One of the difficulties for a beginner in the study of philosophy is that often he finds himself in a world so unfamiliar to him. The many problems he encounters, perhaps, for the first time, the different systems and schools, the diverse solutions frequently given to one and the same question, puzzle him to such an extent that not only does he consider philosophy a dull subject, but sometimes fails to grasp its importance altogether. In order to meet these difficulties, Prof. L. de Raeymaeker, of Louvain, author of a manual of repute on the study of Metaphysics, has prepared an Introduction to Philosophy in general, and to Thomism in particular, which appears now in a revised and enlarged edition.<sup>1</sup>

Its aim is an extremely practical one: to give a clear explanation of philosophy and to facilitate the approach to the understanding of it; to outline the various tendencies of schools and systems; to provide names and dates, so that the student may see at a glance when and where a philosopher lived, his characteristic doctrines, and the school to which he was attached.

In the first part the author deals with philosophy in general, giving a short, but clear and sober, account of the history of philosophy from the early Greek schools to our own time. A study of their unity and their divergence enables him to formulate a very satisfying *exposé* of the notion of philosophy.

The second section is reserved for an introduction to Thomism. This pertinent question arises: Among so many different systems and schools, which one gives the better guarantee of truth, *Quaenam Schola sequenda?* (pp. 115-120). His preference is for the Thomist School; and he states openly, firmly and most con-