

1954 was the seemingly trivial event that aroused the conscience of France and made the name of Abbé Pierre known throughout the world. This tragedy of an innocent child, dying of cold and hunger in an abandoned bus, became the symbol of the lot of thousands, and it needed the burning sincerity of Abbé Pierre to make a whole nation realize its own reproach. But already, in his settlement at 'Emmaus', the priest who had been a Deputy and a leader of the World Federal movement had begun the work of restoring hope and dignity to the homeless and the unfortunate. And this he did not through the elaborate machinery of a 'charitable organization' but through making it possible for the 'companions of Emmaus' to help themselves by building their own houses. He soon attracted every sort of person in need: evicted families, ex-convicts, alcoholics, the rootless victims of war and the German occupation. And there was work for all to do, if only to go out scavenging (and this indeed was a principal source of income). Abbé Pierre spent himself, with the untiring zeal of a St Vincent de Paul, in the service of his 'companions', and despite official obstinacy and the frequent failures of those who had come to him (the only question asked was their need), had already provided a practical answer to an immense problem which French politicians had either ignored or had dismissed as insoluble.

With the vast extension of his mission in the last year M. Simon's book is not concerned. It describes most graphically the work of a man who was ready when the dimensions of the tragedy of poverty and overcrowding were at last properly realized by the public opinion of France. The story of Abbé Pierre is a contemporary application of the perennial meaning of Christian charity, and in a world that has grown used to a secular hope as its salvation Abbé Pierre reaffirms the mission of Christ: a human need that is met for love's sake.

I.E.

ESSAYS ON MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE. By Dorothy Everett. Edited by Patricia Kean. (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Clarendon Press; 18s.)

This work comes to remind us of the loss which medieval English studies suffered by Dorothy Everett's death; but it was characteristic of her whole scholarly life, unhurried, ordered, punctual, that she left behind her unpublished material, some of it commissioned for the *Oxford History of English Literature*, some of it lectures given during the term in which she died, which Miss Kean has been able to print here. In this brief notice only the two Oxford lectures can be mentioned, *Chaucer's Love Visions* and '*Troilus and Criseyde*'. The second of these, the '*Troilus*' lecture, represents the more difficult undertaking, since so many critics, notably Professor C. S. Lewis in *The Allegory of Love*, have

subjected to exhaustive analyses this poem, its sources, its philosophy, and its art. Even so, Dorothy Everett was able to make some contributions, characteristically her own, to our comprehension and enjoyment of *Troilus*, particularly in her consideration of the much-discussed epilogue, where, contradicting various recently-advanced views, she maintained that we shall see the epilogue as the logical and indispensable culmination of the whole work if we will understand the real theme of the poem as 'the failure of human love in its most ideal form'. The epilogue is not 'in any narrow sense the moral of the story. It is the end to which the whole story inevitably moves.' This epilogue, it will be recalled, tells how Troilus, ascending to the seventh sphere after the death in battle which he has sought as the only cure for his wounded heart, sits there looking down upon 'this little spot of earth . . . this wretched world', and laughing to himself at the sorrow of those who bewailed him: and then Chaucer goes on to adjure all young lovers not to put their trust in any of this world's felicities, but only in the Passion and Death of their Redeemer. In the preceding essay, *Chaucer's Love Visions*, the author pointed out that in *The Parlement of Foules* Chaucer shows us Scipio looking down upon a world which is described in terms almost identical with those of the *Troilus* epilogue, and that the poet proceeds to imply in the *Parlement* the same Christian doctrine. This is a part of a long examination of what she regarded as the best of Chaucer's love-visions, in which she declared that she intended 'to carry out . . . what I believe to be the critic's task when he is faced with medieval poetry'. If at times her approach to this task seems pedestrian, that is largely because we are only too well used to the spectacle of her contemporaries cavorting on their hobby-horses, for each of which she had a kindly but dismissive word. To the very end of her career, her attention never wavered from the target which she had chosen, the humane interpretation of medieval English literature. Her celebrity as a scholar, delayed in her lifetime because of an academic catastrophe so appalling that it would have broken anyone of less fortitude, is bound to increase in the coming years; and this admirable volume, produced through the piety of her nearest friends, will do much to ensure this growth.

ERIC COLLEDGE

DIALOGUE D'OMBRES. By Georges Bernanos. (Plon; 360 fr.)

Of the short stories conveniently grouped in this volume three belong to the 1920s and are already known to those interested in Bernanos, while the remaining four, prefaced with a few explanatory pages by M. Béguin, have been reproduced from newspapers of 1913 and 1914. Only one of these latter approaches the level that Bernanos