plough; and the garden is in some sense the pattern of cultivation with which the good farmer seeks conformity (and in China, they say, achieves it perfectly). Unity in variety, relative self-sufficiency, the treating of every part in a proper and separate manner while always relating it to the whole, use in beauty and beauty in use—these are things which all go together in farming and gardening and country crafts, in the shaping of society and of the person. And if the self-sufficiency is bound to remain something relative, we are reminded here of the proper means to complement it—one's own neighbourhood and neighbours, one's fellow-workers and fellow-Christians; not the metropolis and the absentee customer.

These general principles are accompanied and illustrated by a record of the author's own work in his own garden. To enlarge on details would certainly be to betray my ignorance, and I will only suggest respectfully that the appreciation of nettles (p. 104) might have been carried further. Nettles are excellent cattle-fodder if cut and allowed to dry a little, and in some countries I think they are cultivated. (I remember one cow who ate them growing, but she was an eccentric). I have also one contribution to the discussion on fertility—a sentence from a local innkeeper as he summed up the needs of the soil in relation to fertilisers: 'That wants feeding, not having its — guts pulled out.'

However much Mr. Massingham returns to his themes, he always treats them freshly and forcefully. The present book is among his best. There is a wealth of new material, with some admirable quotations (edifying ones from friends and incriminating ones from public men). And his own aphorisms retain their flavour. 'An urban civilization, severed from its own roots. . . regards its own country with either a melting or a calculating eye, and the one takes frequent advantage of the other.' 'As a result of land belonging to me I found that I belonged to the land. As the late Dr. Marett once wrote to me about the demesne of which he was seigneur in Jersey, you can see the sky in the raindrop.' 'Quality . . . is an attribute both of beauty and use, the true bridge that unites them. . . Take care of the quality and the quantity will take care of itself.'

WALTER SHEWRING.

ROMAN VERGIL. By W. Jackson Knight. (Faber; 15s.)

This is a handsome, compendious, informative and refreshing book. It is a virtue in it that nothing very new is said about an old and tried subject, and another virtue that Mr. Knight says so astonishingly much that is old, and in the easy, pleasant style of the past-master in the art of lecture-room dissertation. There is nothing here of the traditional specialist discussion with no apparent background of humanity to point its value. The results of many such investigations are simply used as the comfortable and normal tools

of a mind fully used to discourse in this subject matter. Although a subsequent volume, intended for use as a work of reference, is suggested in the preface, it could surely add little valuable information to the present book, in which the universe of Vergil's imagination is vividly reconstructed in terms of previous and contemporary literature and history; in which it is shown in detail how Vergil originated to best effect when he had most tradition to draw on; in which the familiar difficulties of language, oddities of metre, and peculiarities of style are briefly debated and passed under review.

There has been a tendency in some twentieth century studies of Vergil to explain his importance and universality of appeal in metaphysical rather than historical terms, sometimes with neglect of the context of passages used. Yet the Vergil who appeals to us is essentially the Roman poet of the Augustan Age. Like all great poets he often said more than he knew, but if we pay first attention to his unconscious overtones we risk abandoning Vergil for some unrelated phantasy of our own. Mr. Knight is very well aware of the surplus of meaning which Vergil holds for later ages, but his great knowledge of Vergil's background keeps his modern references always in touch with the concrete subject in its original setting. In biblical terms he is intent on the literal meaning before all others. Yet it must be admitted that a modern enthusiasm for Vergil is coloured by the history of Vergilianism and even of the text. Here again Mr. Knight does not fail us. He tells us alike of the chief MSS. and the famous editions, and of the influence of Vergil on poets from his own times to ours. His chief aim is assuredly to cut back to the man and the poet, but he remembers, too, that Vergil is a literary entity who has grown in stature through the centuries.

IVO. THOMAS, O.P.

ENGLISH LITERARY CRITICISM: THE MEDIEVAL PHASE. By J. W. H. Atkins. (Cambridge University Press 12s. 6d.)

Professor Atkins warns us at the beginning of this book that the literary criticism contained in it has a period interest and importance; we shall find in it 'a running commentary on literature, made up of a few definite studies together with a number of occasional remarks scattered throughout works of various kinds.' The book then deals mainly with the growth of literary consciousness and in doing so both draws upon and supplements the history of the period. Perhaps one can best indicate its value by pointing out that it forms a useful appendix to that re-assessment of the place of medieval habits of thought in Renaissance literature which has recently been set out in such books as Dr. Tillyard's *Elizabethan World Picture* and Mr. Theodore Spencer's *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man*. 'It is only by appreciating the range and tenacity of medieval ideas and influences,' says Professor Atkins, 'that the true position of the