

alterations of hope and despair and the intervention of two world wars—is in the position of knowing all the facts and of possessing a lucidity of style, and an impartial outlook, which makes his narrative at once a chronicle of truth and a fascinating experience for all who have the well-being of the British Theatre at heart.

Mr Whitworth's story is too packed with incident for an easy selection of its high-lights. It shows for instance, how, in 1903, a Mr Badger, a wealthy brewer with a passion for Shakespeare, allowed one half of his gift of £3,000 to be diverted to the fostering of the National Theatre idea which had been aroused by his plea for a statue to the Poet. It shows how that most individualistic of actors, Henry Irving, was willing to support the idea of a National Theatre and how other actors of distinction followed suit. It traces the inception and rise of the British Drama League founded by Mr Whitworth himself with the clarion call that 'the Theatre is everybody's business', and of the subsequent influence the League had upon the whole National Theatre project. There is the history of the purchase of temporary sites. There are absorbing scraps of correspondence here published for the first time. The preface to Harley Granville-Barker and William Archer's book *Plan for a National Theatre*, invaluable to those for whom the book is no longer available, or for whom it has been superseded by the impact of more recent events, is given in full. The entire debate in both Houses of Parliament which led to the granting of the South Bank site and Government support for the venture is happily included. And all fears as to the future of the Old Vic are now dispelled. Lilian Baylis's timeless institution is to be incorporated into the National Theatre and the Directors of the Old Vic together with a panel selected from its Governors will determine the artistic policy of the new venture.

Mr Whitworth is modest about himself and the part he has played in this growing pageant. But writing, however reticent, has a trick of disclosing the writer—and here emerge a graceful spirit, an unswerving faith, an enthusiasm ever young, and an untarnished mind.

ERNEST MILTON

IALOGUE OF COMFORT AGAINST TRIBULATION. By St Thomas More.  
(Sheed and Ward; 10s. 6d.)

We are indebted to Monica Stevens of Vermont for a transcription into modern English of Saint Thomas More's *Dialogue of Comfort*, written by him in prison in 1534. It is a book not so much dealing with doctrine as under the form of a dialogue with the dilemma of a Christian nobleman (Hungarian) under Turkish rule; in reality it is a challenge to the claims of the King to rule the Church. There is the great passage

in which the Saint declares that 'a man cannot be welcome to God who, when called, comes unwillingly': a wonderful and inspiring thought. And again, in the mouth of Vincent, the nephew of the Lord Anthony, it is said: 'For to all of us your good help, comfort and counsel hath long been a great stay—not as an uncle to some, and to others as one further of kin, but as though to us all you had been a natural father'—how apt an illustration of the support to us 'company of sorry comfortless orphans' of the life and prayers of the great Saint! Once more to quote a phrase so appropriate to our submission to Holy Church: 'trust well in God and he shall provide you with outward teachers suitable for every time, or else shall himself sufficiently teach you inwardly'.

The dialogue, writes Chambers in his superb life of More, 'had to be kept very secret; it was a denial of the thesis that the Head of the State might dictate the religious belief of his subjects'; and the time of the martyrdom had not yet come. When the dialogue was written St Thomas had still a year to live.

HENRY SLESSER

HILAIRE BELLOC. An Anthology of his Prose and Verse. Selected by W. N. Roughead. (Rupert Hart-Davis; 15s.)

'Mr Hilaire Belloc is a case for legislation *ad hoc*. He seems to think nobody minds his books being all of different kinds.' This was written in 1905 and there has been an output, prolific and varied, of four decades since then. Mr Roughead's selections, arranged chronologically, present excellent samples of Belloc's versatility as a writer of prose and verse. The collection will be a delight to those who already know and admire the master, and many of the younger generation are to be envied the joy of meeting him for the first time.

Chesterton describes somewhere a political meeting at which Belloc spoke: 'He spoke as well as it is possible to speak'. The same praise could often be applied to his writing: 'He wrote as well as it is possible to write'. In an age of vague and woolly writing he glows with lucidity. Maurice Baring says of Belloc: 'As a prose writer he has other chords to his lyre: wit, irony, vividness, gusto, and above all vision. . . . Grave prose like the mellow tones of a beautifully played 'cello . . . solemn, melancholy and majestic. . . .'

Mr Belloc this year reaches his eighty-second year and his writing days are over. What an immense achievement has been his! Future generations of readers will surely endorse Mr Roughead's verdict: 'Mr Belloc is a great man as well as a great man of letters'.

BERNARD DELANY, O.P.