

medieval English ceramics is in its infancy, and perhaps the chief value of Mr Rackham's preface is that it indicates so many puzzles still waiting to be solved—the sudden apparently transient appearance of *sgraffiato* technique in the fourteenth century or of *repoussé* decoration, the purpose of the grotesque head from Nottingham or of the Cambridge piper, even the first provenance of glaze.

G.M.

SAINT CATHERINE IN TUSCAN PAINTING. By George Kaftal. (Blackfriars Publications; 10s.6d.)

Dr Kaftal's *St Dominic in Early Tuscan Painting*, published last year, was recognised as a notable work of scholarship and also as an altogether delightful piece of book-production—an alliance sufficiently rare to be remarkable. Using the same methods, and aided by the same collaboration by his publisher and printer, he has now provided a companion volume on Saint Catherine of Siena which should receive an especially enthusiastic welcome from the countless thousands who look to St Catherine as their patron, whether as religious sisters or as Dominican tertiaries in the world. But the interest of the book is not confined to what may be called its domestic features, any more than was St Catherine herself confined in her apostolate to her immediate world. The representations of St Catherine, from the familiar portrait by Andrea Vanni (supposed by some to be a portrait, but this Dr Kaftal thinks to be doubtful) to the scenes of her life by Giovanni di Paolo (accompanied by extracts from the charming seventeenth century English translation of the Italian life by 'the Reverend Doctor Caterinus Senensis', alias Ambrosio Politi): all alike reflect that grace and integrity which so impressed her contemporaries and have gone on drawing men and women to St Catherine ever since. The iconography of the saints is a matter of more than academic consequence, and it is absorbing to watch its development under the guidance of an expert who shares the painters' devotion for the woman they intend to honour.

Dr Kaftal provides a useful introduction and detailed notes on each of the pictures reproduced. It must remain a matter for admiration that so exquisitely produced a book (there are thirty-nine full page reproductions of quite exceptional accuracy and definition) should be sold for half-a-guinea. ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

TRADITION IN SCULPTURE. By Alec Miller. (Studio Publications; 30s.)

Art manages to keep alive today less by the efforts of modern artists than by the boundless enthusiasm of a few people whose minds really are warmed and nourished by the contemplation of things excellently made. For such as these no art book can ever be a tenth part as exciting as some common object made with skill and love. For such a beholder no craftsman ever laboured excessively or in vain. To him beauty's action is everywhere stronger than fire.

How to describe the effect on such a person's mind of things like a Gothic tower in a green countryside, a sun-drenched cloister in old Provence, a handful of little broken terracotta toys from Lesbos or Samos seen under a glass case! It is not to be compared either with the physical effect of wine or with the spiritual effect of the Blessed Sacrament. Its benefit is more like that of a strong wind blowing from his home to a man in exile.

Whoever has felt the nearness of eternity when looking at carved or moulded pieces of the earth will find this book a bore. Whoever is unfortunate enough to have to undergo an examination in Art History will probably find it invaluable.

Mr Miller is an expert craftsman, as the examples of his work reproduced in the book will show. He writes clearly enough to display his great regard for scholarship and his love of truth. He naturally spurns the contemporary art-jargon. His chief fault is a tendency to lapse into a conventional pomp of language that obscures his gift of being able to perceive and enjoy beauty.

It is because I find this discrepancy between his instincts, which are true, and his language, which is stilted, that I have come to the conclusion that Mr Miller has written the wrong kind of book. Sometimes indeed it is almost as if he were writing someone else's book. The reason is that in trying to write a history of the world's sculpture he has only succeeded in writing a rather vague and abbreviated history of the world.

I quite realise that essays on the history of sculpture necessarily involve the writer in all sorts of other histories—philosophic, social, religious, economic and so on. This author has made a most gallant attempt to equip himself with as much of this subsidiary learning as he considered necessary, but who at the end comes riding out of a wood if it is not the White Knight? Now I am convinced that Mr Miller is much more than being merely a person who lives by art, he is certainly one of that rare company by whom art lives. I therefore take the liberty of exhorting him to throw off all the encumbering utensils he has acquired and rely on his own native power of seeing things as the people who made them intended them to be seen.

The men who carved the North Porch of Chartres were ignorant of all else but stonework, and we who are ignorant of all else but germs and electrons have almost quite forgotten how to read that simple, divine language of stone. In order to read it we do not need to learn about Duns Scotus and Abelard, but we do need to understand the grammar of stone-masonry.

Let Mr Miller compound an elementary syntax of stone, let him parse and conjugate the swelling forms and the deep shadowy hollows, the crisp edges and the subtle swinging grooves. Let him write of what he loves and knows, and he will make a book worth treasuring. But let him remember always the ignorance of the men who made art history.

PETER WATTS.