

four centuries to establish a new University Chaplaincy for Catholic students in George Square. From the day of their arrival Whittaker, who lived at the other side of the Square, was their most valued friend and generous benefactor. In the early days, when life was hard for the Fathers and for the students, he showed his generosity in countless intimate ways. In those days the students were a penurious lot, but we knew that if we needed a kettle for tea-making or an electric fire to reduce the chill of Edinburgh's icy winter we had only to ask the 'Professor'. It was his unfailing support and his influence, exercised unobtrusively in University circles, allied to the zeal and labours of Father Giles Black, which rapidly made the Chaplaincy one of the best-known institutions in University life in Edinburgh. Accompanied by Lady Whittaker, also a most devoted and popular friend of the students and Chaplaincy, he rarely missed a Sunday afternoon meeting during term. We who were students then perhaps did not fully realize how privileged we were, but without exception we loved and admired him.

DROSTAN MACLAREN, O.P.

WALTER DE LA MARE. In one of John Buchan's most endearing novels, *Huntingtower*, there was a young man who passionately longed to be a poet, but his appearance and his name—John Heritage—were, he gloomily observed, altogether too poetical for him to have any hope of success: real poets had vulgar monosyllables for names, like John Keats. But the exhibition which the National Book League have been holding in honour of Mr Walter de la Mare's eighty-third birthday gives Mr Heritage the lie. Walter de la Mare is a name that eminently becomes a poet, and the photographs brilliantly displayed upon the walls of the exhibition show a man who, from the beginning of his career until this present plenitude of days, has displayed good looks of so dark and romantic a kind that the imagination could hardly have invented a more poetical looking poet, even if put to it. The number of publications covered by this exhibition was enormously large, for Mr de la Mare's output, even considering it takes in some fifty years, is prodigious; there were early editions and late of many of his works; copies of some long out of print; copies illustrated by artists so wide apart in time and type as Dickie Doyle and John Piper; broadsheets of the 'twenties and sober, decorous volumes from Faber in the 'fifties. But then Mr de la Mare has long enjoyed a number of established reputations; as a poet of childhood, as a writer of the most subtle prose, as an anthologist of a new and wonderfully creative kind; as a master of the macabre and as a lyrist of rare genius. What, I think, is less generally recognized is the courage and realism with which

he faces the inevitability of the human journey; he is a serious poet, of little hope and much fortitude, whose eye is so acute that smallness in itself is a kind of comfort to him: whose ear is so sensitive that it is constantly alive to the rushing wind of time over and above the comfortable noise of ordinary life. *The Traveller* was a revelation of this side of Mr de la Mare's genius, that long poem with the end of its ambiguous pilgrimage finishing with a questioning sigh, like Vaughan William's *Sixth Symphony* which it so much, to my mind, resembles. There is no manuscript of *The Traveller* in the Book League show, but there is a manuscript of *Winged Chariot*, the previous volume which also took time as its theme; and it is extraordinary to see the corrections, the emendations, the second, third and fourth thoughts, all inserted in that beautiful gothick script which might well be that of his own Scribe: 'ere unto Z my pen drew nigh, Leviathan told and the honey fly'.

Absorbing also are the corrections on galley and page proof; it is an object lesson in craftsmanship to see how his stuff is worked over and over, until the apparently effortless result lies fair upon the page, looking as though it had flowed white-hot from the poet's imagination in the form in which we now have it. It is salutary to ponder upon the endless hammering and proving which led to its forging. Even more surprising, perhaps, are the evidences of the sheer donkey-work he put in on the techniques of his craft in the early days. Notebooks are here displayed in which he kept patient detailed records of weather and light over long periods; others which contain almost scientific tables worked out to plot the incidence of verbs and nouns and adjectives in Chaucer and Keats and other writers—the kind of thing which one would expect to lead to work of the most pedestrian kind and which in fact lead us—as to a window on the west—to lines like:

Look thy last on all things lovely,
Every hour. Let no night
Seal thy sense in deathly slumber
Till to delight

Thou have paid thy utmost blessing. . . .

As more permanent records of this excellent exhibition, the N.B.L. have issued a special number of their journal *Books* devoted to Mr de la Mare, and an admirable checklist which acts as catalogue to the exhibition, but which no serious student of Mr de la Mare's work can afford to be without, for it is slow work compiling one for oneself, as I have discovered to my cost.

MARYVONNE BUTCHER