

NOTICES

THE NICHOMACHEAN ETHICS. A commentary by the late H. H. Joachim, edited by D. A. Rees. (Geoffrey Cumberlege: Oxford; 25s.)

This work is the fruit of fifteen years' lecturing in Oxford at the beginning of the century. It is not minute or critical, and opens with a remarkable *lacuna*, namely, no reference at all to the much-discussed description of 'the good' in 1094 a. 2, 3. Scholastic users should be warned that the author does not appear to have been in touch with the long tradition of scholastic commenting on the work; they will find, for instance, no mention of Prudence, which appears under the alias 'practical wisdom'. However, purged as it has been by the editor, of the author's idealism, the book makes an excellent elementary commentary, as well as a useful introduction to Aristotelian ideas in general.

I.T.

POETRY AND DRAMA. By T. S. Eliot. (Faber; 7s. 6d.)

Mr Eliot's latest critical essay, originally a lecture delivered at Harvard in 1950, has all the personal characteristics we have grown to expect: a statement of principles and distinctions so clear as to make discussion vain, an examination of his own practice more penetrating and more just than that of any other critic (of *The Cocktail Party* he says: 'I laid down for myself the ascetic rule to avoid poetry which could not stand the test of strict dramatic utility: with such success, indeed, that it is perhaps an open question whether there is any poetry in the play at all'), and a humility and humour which disguise almost too successfully the weight of his practical wisdom.

B.W.

SWEET CORK OF THREE. By Robert Gibbings, with engravings by the author. (Dent; 16s.)

There is a special enchantment about the work of Robert Gibbings which places it beyond the range of heavy-handed criticism. His engravings, exact and evocative, are the perfect accompaniment to his writing, which has the discursive charm of a traveller's conversation as he makes his way by easy stages through a countryside that is his own. *Sweet Cork* begins at Gougane Barra and wanders through the lovely land of County Cork and Kerry. Here are recaptured a people's talk and tradition, with many an interlude of the author's own remembrances of childhood or of travels in other lands.

I.E.

THE LIMITS OF ART. Poetry and Prose chosen by Ancient and Modern Critics, edited by Huntington Cairns. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 35s.)

It might be thought that every conceivable principle had by this been applied to the making of an anthology, but Mr Cairns has discovered a new one. His starting point is the critic, and his selections are of those poems and passages of prose which 'competent' critics have especially praised. His extracts are followed by the critics' judgments, so that the reader may come to his own conclusions about both choice and chooser.

With characteristic American thoroughness, the fifteen hundred pages of *The Limits of Art* range from Homer to James Joyce. Translations are given where the original language is not English; and, quite apart from the special criterion of Mr Cairns' anthology, this literary pantechnicon provides probably more material from a wider variety of sources than anything else in print. But the critics' praise grows monotonous: single sentences—'This is sublime to the last degree'; 'No such poetry has been written since . . .'; 'Nothing can be conceived more poetical'—are scarcely serious critical judgments, and the cumulative effect is that of a publisher's announcement. There is one piece of humour. A blank page is given to Milton's *Macbeth*: 'the most fascinating poem ever unwritten', said Quiller-Couch.

I.E.

LA VIE DOMINICAINE. Edition nouvelle. Par Renée Zeller. Collection 'Les grands Ordres monastiques et Instituts religieux'. (Bernard Grasset.)

This welcome new edition of a book first published in 1927 and sponsored by the Dominican Order, brings the description of its life and work carefully up to date. The first two chapters, on St Dominic and Lacordaire respectively, are particularly fine. The Province of France has provided the author with concrete material, and some of the customs quoted are peculiar to that country. In essence the Order is, of course, the same everywhere. The book is excellently written, though a few passages will strike English readers as too sentimental. It is just the thing to put into the hands of any young man attracted to the Order. The Dominican Nuns, Sisters and lay Tertiaries are referred to in passing, but the subject of the book is the life of the Friars.