

were familiar currency before the first war. They have been revived here and there since then. But to see them all marshalled with earlier work such as the exquisite engravings of Bewick makes one realise what considerable talent and brilliant success are to be found in this one line of craftsmanship. It was, as the author points out, an age of transition and revolution in the means of reproducing the work of the artist on paper; and often these new methods were used for commercial purposes and the market was flooded with vivid and sickly pictures to attract and augment the vulgar taste. But in spite of this men were working at the art with nobler aims; even the Pre-Raphaelites were able to achieve perhaps their greatest success in this medium (look at the Cranes, Burne Joneses, Hugheses in this book), and the century culminated with the work of William Morris. It might be said that these men did well for books what they did weakly and degenerately for direct painting. Anyway the selector and author of this history shows nothing which is not pleasing to the eye. He shows few illustrations which make with the letterpress a composite whole, but, since the manuscripts of the age before printing, that art has been almost lost. The author gives the history not only of the artists but also of the processes of reproduction as they developed throughout the century. And the book itself is well worthy of its subject, being the joint work not only of the author and publisher, but also of three printers and several artists. It is a book of charm and a happy tribute, long overdue, to the accomplishments of the last century.

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

MAINLY ON THE AIR. By Max Beerbohm. (Heinemann; 8s. 6d.)

It was not without misgivings that I opened the latest collection of Max's essays and addresses, particularly the addresses. For although in the writing of prose and the execution of caricature he had never offended, and even his rare but tender use of a post-Edwardian means of communication had charmed my ear, his modest suggestion that some of these efforts might be read aloud by anyone who could afford a first-class subscription to Boots' library made me fear the worst. But now that I have made the venture, I remain as idolatrous as ever. Max still implements his ancient determination. Whether it is a record of what he has told us in his own utterly inimitable accents at the microphone or the printed expression of his thoughts—simple, fastidious, loyal—the words leap to the ear as of old. The best appreciation of his own prose is that which he wrote of Whistler's.

The period, too, is Whistler's. Speak about walking in the Row to a member of the rising generation, it has recently been suggested by an essayist who comes as nearly as possible to Max's calibre, and you will probably be asked, 'What Row?' When Max wrote his essay on the things that really mattered in 1880—a date at which his own generation was scarcely conscious of those great events—he com-

pelled his readers to recognise their continuity with their forbears by the challenging jingle of Hamilton Aidé:

Say, shall these things be forgotten
In the Row that men call Rotten,

But his experiences at that time, so movingly told here in 'A Small Boy seeing Giants', now appear to belong to an age from which we are as completely isolated as from that of the Saxon kings. How gently he criticises us! He hopes that the housemaid will not handle untenderly the last of all top-hats, filled with earth and nourishing the bulb of a hyacinth; thinking the while in the categories of an age which still knew housemaids. If he cannot enthuse over the sight of a syndicate and is certain that he will never enjoy playgoing as he did half-a-century ago, he is ready to admit that the play at least is 'a better thing than it used to be'.

Best of all, he is still the critic of merely conventional views and traditional stuffiness, wherever they are found and at whatever time. Schooldays, he insists again in 'Old Carthusian Memories', are not the happiest time of our lives: after-life must not be one long anticlimax, the American's justification for joy in the presence of his race's cradle can only be that he himself was never rocked in it. 'T. Fenning Dodsworth', an affectionate description of an impressively futile personality, is a fitting close to this slender and characteristic addition to the never unweildy bulk of Max's works. For it was written when the Dodsworths not only survived but were recognisable, and when the continuity of historical progress from the Reform Bill to still wider vistas of democracy still seemed secure, in 1922. That was before there broke in upon us the Century of the Common Man and before we were cut off alike from the good life of the old tradition and from the newer, more sweetly reasonable faith of the year 2000 by what our author has elsewhere so aptly called 'the great pale platitude of the meantime'. EDWARD QUINN

SCOTT-KING'S MODERN EUROPE. By Evelyn Waugh. (Chapman and Hall; 5s.)

Ageing schoolmasters and dotty republics have a special interest for Mr Waugh, and this cautionary tale of the adventures of Mr Scott-King while enjoying Neutrialian hospitality provides every opportunity for the exercise of his tricks of aculeated observation and the manoeuvring of the preposterous. The classical master at Grantchester attends the tercentenary celebrations of Bellorius, a poetaster who is his 'special subject', and the combination of totalitarian hospitality, bogus scholarship and graft brings out the authentic Waugh *bouquet*. American critics will surely see a moral in this offering, and nearer home it may be saluted as another instalment of Mr Waugh's *corpus catholicium*. In fact it is a novelist's fair copy: skilful, slight, an extended note in the margin. I.E.