

other. From this union springs the powerful impression of *reality* which Graham Greene's novels leave. And what higher praise than that could any artist deserve?

SOCIAL SERVICE (September-November) prints an appeal by Charles W. Ferguson, editor of the *Readers Digest*, to the great voluntary agencies engaged in social work to use their international resources to foster free communication among the peoples of the world. The appeal has its force for Catholics who, by virtue of their membership of the mystical body of Christ, should be foremost in prayer and work for the removal of the senseless barriers that separate the nations. Are Catholic organisations, one wonders, conspicuous for their sense of *catholic*, i.e. universal, responsibility? Such bodies as the Society of St Vincent de Paul have a world-wide membership, and a world-wide opportunity.

FATHER LA FARGE surveys two thousand numbers of *America* (September 13) and concludes that the problems the Catholic journalist must deal with are as perennial as original sin.

ORDEN CRISTIANO (August) continues its sturdy battle for the principles of Christian democracy in the unfriendly setting of Peron's Argentine.

THE CHURCHMAN (September) has a useful series of articles on the Ecumenical Movement among Protestants.

ETUDES (September) includes Père Daniélou's view of Christianity and History: 'Christianity is the building up in time of the mystery hidden in God from all eternity'.

LA FRANCE CATHOLIQUE (September 19) publishes a vigorous defence of Christian education by Père Sertillanges: 'the citizen is not merely an elector; he has a soul'.

ALDATE.

ANANDA COOMARASWAMY

News has reached us of the death, shortly after his 70th birthday, of Dr Ananda Coomaraswamy. Dr Coomaraswamy was for many years an occasional contributor to *BLACKFRIARS*, and it will be remembered that Eric Gill wrote of him in the *Autobiography*: 'I believe that no other living writer has written the truth in matters of art and life and religion and piety with such wisdom and understanding'. During all his curatorship at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts—where he was wont to describe himself simply 'as a research fellow at this museum'—the degree of distinction in his connoisseurship and the

vastness of the learning displayed in his expository and literary work was almost fabulous. Indeed it is entirely in accord with a fully established reputation, rather than a merely private judgment, to say that no work left his hands that any living man could have done more perfectly.

The introduction to Western minds of the cultural fruit of the East was the external structure of the task within which his life's work developed. It involved finding a common language of thought in which the products of a consciously metaphysical way of life could be explained to modern Western people. This again involved affirmations at two levels. The first was to show in folk-art and folk-lore, the fairy tale and the old wife's tale the sturdy, if almost submerged, survival of a traditional and enlightened wisdom common to all peoples from time immemorial until yesterday. The second was the developed metaphysical understanding of art, its operation and its product, its exemplary, formal and final causes. Here he found it necessary to recall a public for whom metaphysics had come to be associated only with silly jokes about looking for a black hat in the dark to the living relevance of the great theses of Plato and Aristotle, the Platonists, Augustine and the scholastics. Thus it fell to the Indian scholar to teach his Western public their own traditional wisdom in order that they might have some ground from which to understand his.

That, so to say, was the task we Westerners gave him to awaken us. For the life's work it was only a stepping stone. Samples of his later work are to be found in such exegetical essays, published in the journal of the American Oriental Society and similar transatlantic journals, as *Rgveda* 10, 90, 1 *aty atisthad dasangulam*. To read such work, even with an understanding lagging far behind his scholarship and the angelic simplicity of his exposition, is not to be assailed by any superficial, because generalised, theory of the universality of religions, but to be made witness, if not participant in the penetration of light by light: East and West respectively illuminating each other while retaining their distinctive idioms.

An angel among intellectuals, yes, as St Thomas was. But Catholics who have come in contact with him or his work will remember also the high challenge of his unflinching charity. He never spoke of devotion or of the love of Christ as if he had not experienced them.

BERNARD KELLY