

accuses of 'almost toxic virulence'. Half-finished canvases like Madox Brown's 'Take Your Son, Sir' show you some of the tricks of the Pre-Raphaelite trade.

There is a vast Pre-Raphaelite bibliography—most of it very readable. Mr John Gere has made admirable use of contemporary material in the Descriptive Catalogue appended to the book's ninety-four full-page plates. There is also a series of small illustrative drawings—including woodcuts from such treasure-trove as the Moxon 'Tennyson'—in the catalogue itself.

One misses Madox Brown's 'Christ Washing Peter's Feet' which was skyed in the Academy of 1851 for its Pre-Raphaelite heresies. It is highly characteristic in composition and handling; and among its apostles are half-a-dozen or so of the 'set', including (traditionally) Christina Rossetti as St John. One also regrets that the Rossettian Hunt and the Rossettian Burne-Jones are not represented by such exquisite things as 'The Ponte Vecchio' and 'Merlin and Nimue', both in South Kensington. One really vulgar but characteristic Hunt, 'The Awakened Conscience' would have done to set off his delightful 'Hireling Shepherd'. We might have been spared half the fumbling and unimaginative Arthur Hugheses. One of Burne-Jones's later murals might have made way for 'The Merciful Knight'. Miss Siddall would have upheld her Ruskinian reputation better with the beautiful and original 'We are Seven' she gave to Dr Acland—now in the reviewer's possession—than with the gawky and derivative 'Clerk Sanders'.

Yet, as a representative survey, the book could hardly have done more to record the ups and downs of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Its peaks and pitfalls provide our own even less auspicious age with ideals to amplify and examples to deter. After a hundred years the P.R.B.'s original values have reasserted themselves. In an age of technicians it is not the paintiest painter, Millais, who is most esteemed. At his worst, Millais made £30,000 a year; 'but', as the dying Madox Brown said, 'Rossetti was a genius'.

HELEN PARRY EDEN.

THE BEST OF BEARDSLEY. Edited by R. A. Walker. (Bodley Head; 25s.)

The Bodley Head is to be congratulated on the appearance of a Yellow Book as fascinating as any that has gone before. Here, on paper of fine quality and beautifully reproduced, we do indeed find the best of Beardsley.

What was he like, this man who, haunted by strange rhythms of the East, lived before his time; whose purity of line so strangely belies the decadence of his style; whose sensitivity plunged him at once into the social trivialities of Pope, the cold and sordid horror of Wilde's Sabene, and the silent pathos of the death of Pierrot; who could suggest a pregnant beauty amid the chaos of a caustic

wit; whose wizardry in black and white bespoke a fantasy of colours?

And this offering of his best presents us with a problem as enigmatic as his character itself. For despite his unusual genius Beardsley was by no means generally accepted as the ideal illustrator of books. Mr Walker, in an admirable preface packed with atmosphere, perhaps gives us the clue when he points out that he was no mere hack. All his work was a commentary on the text; all his caricature a commentary on life around him. Was this his job? Certainly contemporaries were shocked, and even today he makes us feel uncomfortable. Can it be modesty? or a sudden defence of charity? Or is it simply that we do not like the truth?

B. BURNS.

WOOD ENGRAVING. By George E. Mackley. (National Magazine Co.; 15s.)

For those wishing to undertake the exquisite but exacting art of wood engraving a teacher is necessary to demonstrate the technique with the actual tools and materials. If the beginner is unable to get to such a teacher then Mr Mackley's book will be of the greatest help in his brave attempt to teach himself. Besides being a good artist the author is also an excellent teacher. So often the expert unconsciously presumes that what is obvious to him is clear to his pupil and so he fails to transfer essentials from his own to his pupil's mind. There are other good books on wood engraving, e.g., by Clare Leighton, John Beedham, John Farleigh, Iain Macnab, etc., but so many have an exasperating habit of being silent just at the point where we need information.

The great advantage of this book is that it is so extremely thorough, explaining, with admirable clarity and conciseness, just those things the beginner wants to know—principles, history, choice of equipment, technique, a chapter on Bewick and some modern engravers, bibliography, a selection of examples of modern work, and even details about societies and exhibitions. He also gives addresses where materials can be obtained. He gives a wealth of those helpful and often essential details which the self-taught artist would take years to discover for himself—if he ever discovered them at all.

G. COLMAN.

THE GUEST-ROOM BOOK. Assembled by F. J. Sheed. (Sheed & Ward; 10s. 6d.)

This latest bedside book, 'for highbrows, middlebrows and lowbrows', contains nothing very new, but it has Chesterton, Beachcomber, Alfred Noyes, Eric Gill, Ronald Knox and all of *Murder in a Nunnery*, that delightful fusion of the nunnish and the felonious. It has been tested in exacting circumstances by the present reviewer, and can be recommended as an appropriate gift to all who have to spend their days, as well as their nights, in bed.

I. E.