

untouched, it is true, by social workers but having, even so, something to give apart from a water supply and eggs for breakfast.

I. E.

TROIS DRAMES DE L'ASIE. Par Louis Laloy. (Cahiers du Rhone.)

Two of these three delightful little plays have a Chinese setting. One is transported into the almost unreal simplicity of Chinese classical painting where exterior reality is only a beautiful form, the mere material dwelling of some inherent deity. 'Le Songe de la Vie' is an attractive exposition of the Taoist ethic of Lao-Tzu, a contemplative sage of high moral standing and elevated life, somewhat comparable doctrinally with St John of the Cross, in which the central figure achieves the mystical death of all desire and union with the Seven Immortals. 'Le Chagrin au Palais de Hau', the second of these classical plays, has an historical background and a religious basis of an altogether different ethic. Here one is no longer in the dreamy and detached realms of Taoist mysticism, but in the practical and rather intricate moralities of Confucianism.

In the third play, 'Vikrama et Ourvasi' or 'Le Roi et l'Apsara', one is carried from China to India, from Taoist simplicity to Buddhist multiplicity, from the thin remoteness of high Chinese thought to the voluptuous sensuality of Indian religious symbolism.

All three have this much in common and this much to teach us, namely, that without a transcendental religious framework rooted in the divine, the pattern of our life is a meaningless kaleidoscope without form or purpose. One may feel a certain superior derision for the changeless East gazing passionlessly into the Infinite, today as two thousand years ago, but inasmuch as it represents Mary's better part and the essential nature of mankind, it is far more sane than the chaotic activity of her smart Western sister.

L. L.

PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHERS. By Rt Rev. Mgr A. Ryan, D.D. (Clonmore and Reynolds; 3s. 6d.)

These short biographies of St Augustine, Boethius, Abelard and St Thomas, should encourage a deeper study of their lives and works. Originally cast in the form of radio scripts, they are simple and straightforward, but Mgr Ryan is well versed in the great problems with which his heroes wrestled and knows how to make those problems significant for the general reader: two final chapters on Greek philosophy and the Neo-Scholastic revival are particularly valuable in this respect. A Platonic note seems, by an oversight, to have crept into the description of St Thomas's death: 'After the short imprisonment of only 49 years in its mortal integument, the soul of the Angelic Doctor went to enjoy that Beatific Vision whose mysteries, even on earth, he almost seemed to sound'.

E. Q.