

shown, in every case depend on a sound preparation for matrimony; the first chapters of the book discussing problems of courtship and the social relations between adolescents of both sexes. The tale of misery resulting from a partnership between superficial acquaintances, or one based on mere sexual attraction, is unfolded daily in the divorce courts of America. The attempt of some American towns to commercialise 'marriage' ceremonies, as though they were commodities to be purchased for cash at a moment's notice; the facilities provided by some states for divorce; the propagation of contraceptive practices; and the unheeding, almost encouraging, attitude of the secular Press to these evils; all are condemned by Dr Schmiedeler as primary causes of the destruction of the Christian ideal of marriage.

The latter part of the book is concerned with the family; the rights of the family, and the obligations of the state towards this social unit.

The advice given throughout is clear and practical, showing a keen appreciation of the difficulties and problems before and after marriage. The introduction of photographic illustrations is a brilliant idea, and they add greatly to the attractiveness of a textbook which commends itself to those responsible for the education of Catholic youth.

MAURICE MCLOUGHLIN.

THE DEEVIL'S WALTZ. By Sydney Goodsir Smith. Illustrated by Denis Peploe. No. 7, Poetry Scotland Series. (MacLellan; 6s.)

This third volume of Sydney Smith's poems has things in it to confirm the opinion that he is one of the most important of the younger Scots poets. The title poem and a dozen or so others show the lyrical power and turn of satire which have drawn attention to him. But much of the present volume is dreary going. At times the language seems laboured, and is helped out by clichés; though even in the dullest work there comes now and then a line that startles and holds.

A. R.

CITIZENS IN READINESS. (Oxford House, Mape Street, E.2; 2s. 4d. post free.)

This is an account of the evacuation of East End children to Wales during the war. The scheme was a voluntary one, undertaken by Oxford House which for sixty years has played a prominent part in the social life of Bethnal Green. At a time when the voluntary principle is being crowded out of the national life as rapidly as bureaucracy can manage (and that, fortunately, is never likely to be very rapidly or very effectively), any reminder of what can be achieved to fill the gaps of state-provided social services is of interest. The basis of the Oxford House scheme was the evacuation of *family* groups and, despite much improvisation and easy acceptance of educational theories of a dubious usefulness, *Citizens in Readiness* certainly records a valuable experiment. But it is shocking to find a total indifference to the world the schools invaded; remote, rural,

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.