

THE ARTIST IN SOCIETY. By Gino Severini. Translated by Bernard Wall. The Changing World Series. (Harvill Press; 4s.)

This book, by a leading Italian painter of religious subjects, is of interest not merely to students of art, but to all concerned with present-day problems. While at the start the writer's references to Picasso, and the illustrations chosen might make it seem an apology for the extreme modern development of painting, the book develops into a wide philosophic discussion of the significance of the poet and painter in the social scheme.

The underlying theme is the necessity for the freedom of the artist, from the so-called 'bourgeois' or snob convention as well as from the political tyranny of Left or Right politics. Surveying the ruins of the European world, the writer sees in Art the hope of the future. This, to him, lies in the assertion of the Individual as opposed to mass regimentation, of things of the spirit against materialism. The message of the artist is that of Truth, of peace and hope and eternal values, in a world which hungers for while it despairs of these things.

The range and depth of Severini's outlook is welcome after the smugness and provincialism of so much English criticism. While all will not share his admiration of Picasso, the book is helpful towards understanding what that painter is trying to express philosophically. A chapter on Art in Russia shows the dilemma of Marxist thought confronted with the manifestation of the non-material values which it denies. The false values of 'bourgeois' society, or painting with an eye on the dealers, are also exposed. An analysis of Existentialism in relation to art is interesting. While not definitely aligning himself with this point of view, the writer seems definitely impressed with the self-reliance and 'realism' of the Christian Existentialists. The movement itself he regards as a passing phase of thought.

It is a matter for regret that the illustrations chosen should be from Picasso, Puni, and two of Severini's own recent secular works in the modern manner rather than some of his religious subjects recently shown in this country, or from those reproduced in *Art Notes* (Summer 1947). The printing is good and the price amazingly low. Bernard Wall is to be congratulated on the fluent translation.

J. CLEEVES

NINETEEN STORIES. By Grahame Greene. (Heinemann; 8s. 6d.)

These 'by-products of a novelist's career' are marked with the sign that reveals the author of *Brighton Rock* or *The Power and the Glory*, but the sign flickers in the cramped room of an exacting form in which Mr Greene admits that he has 'never properly practised'. The short story scarcely allows for that suspended development of a moral problem—the coiled thread of decision deferred, of fear gradually engulfing a man's mind—which, below the swift races of narrative, make up a Graham Greene novel.

But these by-products are worth more than the principal manu-