

## WORK AND LEISURE. By Eric Gill. (Faber &amp; Faber; 5/-.)

Most people who have followed Eric Gill's thought over the quite few years in which his name has been appearing on book covers must be aware of two chief phases of development and the beginning of a third: there was a period in which, with much sinewy intellectual labour and many startling clarities, he thought himself into St. Thomas; then a period in which his thought seemed almost trapped by St. Thomas and struggled within the limits of Thomist terminology; a final period in which, very clearly, St. Thomas has set him free. It is a freedom that takes some winning, for very few Thomist writers have attained it and the names of those are spoken softly. The mark of it is a style that can speak without hindrance as between man and man, rather than as between a *Summa* reference and an audience who are searching the index of their St. Thomas to trace it. In point of style, of arrangement, of convincingness, of that which makes an argument valuable for itself and not only logically sound, it would be difficult to praise *Work and Leisure* too highly. There is the gaiety of the intelligence in this book, and language that men use in ordinary conversation reveals glimpses of a background that is much more than a dialectic synthesis. This is to say nothing of the argument itself but of the sparks which shoot off sideways from the argument, as when he says in one place that misery is by far the worst part of pain, and in another, "... confronted by useful things, even if they are merely useful, (man) does not suffer the misery he suffers when confronted by the absurd, the illogical, the unreasonable."

The argument itself is not new, it is only newly said. Work, human work, is considered as art, "and the artist is not a special kind of man but every man is a special kind of artist." Artist—that is, a skilful workman, a responsible workman, a workman responsible for the quality of what he produces. In tracing the tendencies which have reduced the working-man to a subhuman condition of intellectual irresponsibility he shows very lucidly that industrialism has sinned much less by cruelty to the workman than by the degradation of the workman. And the degradation of the workman who, by his function in economic society, is an irresponsible factory-tool is not relieved by lectures on Shakespeare in the evenings. If leisure makes degradation tolerable (as it does in nearly every house in nearly every street in nearly every suburb) then it only helps the wholesale reduction of life to a subhuman level. A subhuman level; a level beneath the practical intelligence; a level founded in the denial of man's rationality and of his responsibility *in that work by which he is principally designated a member of society*. To be clever after half past six is about as much use as to be allowed one hour a

week in which to be religious.

The final chapter, *Art as things unsaleable*, so enlarges the vision of the book that one more than half wishes it had been put first, and wonders where Eric Gill would have got to if it had. "Let us forget for the moment the benefits we receive in exchange—the countless conveniences of applied science—let us simply note that by no possibility, by no stretch of the imagination, can we say that the factory product is the product of man the lover. Factory articles are not the love songs of anybody." Yes, but that is a dirge. It would not have been if the book had begun with it. And so with the concluding sentences, "Art and holiness have no longer any connection and the most honoured of the arts is the art of salesmanship. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" A dirge. In a sense the whole book is a dirge. A lucid and penetrating dirge. Even a gay dirge. An excellent dirge. A dirge for the spiritual reading of those who think humanitarianism is another name for charity and cheerful English compromise a synonym for spiritual gaiety.

Work as art suggests skill, responsibility. Work as work suggests patience, humility. Patience. This is not a dope to the poor. It is the most revolutionary virtue that can be named. It is the worker's immediate access to the Christ Who upset the tables of the money changers. It means nothing without the Cross but a hideous imbecility. With the Cross it is quite simply victory. It was a pity we were not allowed to consider work just as work for, say, one chapter.

BERNARD KELLY.

LES DROITS DU TRAVAILLEUR ET LE CORPORATISME. By P. Chanson. (Desclée de Brouwer; 8 frs.)

It cannot be said that social problems receive that attention which their importance and urgency demands. There prevails an indifference and lack of sympathetic understanding difficult to be reconciled with the unceasing warnings of Leo XIII and Pius XI.

*Les Droits du Travailleur et le Corporatisme* should arouse our interest and bring home to us the profound wisdom of the two Encyclicals dealing with the social order. The writer is "intensely interested" in social problems and his work displays a balanced mind whose keenness is mellowed by a wide experience of the issues involved. For it is comparatively easy to theorize about social problems, but unless theories are inspired and supported by experience they tend to lose touch with reality and become useless.

In the first part Paul Chanson treats of the rights of workmen and shows how the whole social problem pivots on the securing and safeguarding of these rights. He quotes numerous passages from the *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*, all to the effect that wages should be determined by the vital needs of the