

The West Country is known as a region with a rich literature; and while Mr Wilshire's collection reveals the wealth of the past, includes most of the established favourites, it also indicates the stirring of new talent, as an encouraging sign for the future. Any editor undertaking a task of this kind will be unable to satisfy all tastes, for there are various levels of judgment. Some will no doubt complain that in making his selection, in grouping his writers under counties, the editor has not been entirely fair in his representative task.

He has, for instance, listed Baring-Gould in the Cornish section, and has set there also such a writer as H. A. Manhood. Neil Bell is under the Devon heading, while Daniel Defoe is passed off as a stalwart of Somerset. On the other hand, it is possible to put up arguments for the inclusion of good material set in a particular county irrespective of the general tendency of a writer's work.

However this may be, Lewis Wilshire has brought to the notice of readers much valuable new work. He has underlined, as it were, the emergence of a new school of creative writers in one section of England. He has printed the first story written by the Cornish farmer, poet and playwright, Ronald Duncan. He has drawn attention to the craftsmanship of John Atkins, to the delicate touch of Gilbert Phelps and, without false modesty, to his own art.

The reader will be grateful for the mingling of past and present, will get a new sense of what is happening in the literature of the region as he reads a story of Baring-Gould that is followed immediately by A. L. Rowse's tale. Those artists who love the past evolve their own art to interpret it; and there is enough tragedy and mirth and fantasy in this collection to cajole the mind, causing the reader to forget what the critic would urge him to remember.

E. W. MARTIN.

TREEN OR SMALL WOODWARE THROUGHOUT THE AGES. By Edward H. Pinto. (Batsford; 25s.)

Now that so many of us are dining—as our forbears did—where we cook, the beauty and utility of the small woodware of pre-industrialist days become more and more obvious as its vestiges grow scarcer. Mr Pinto is a collector of 'treen'. The word is used by Evelyn for anything made from trees—even date wine. Mr Pinto's book confines itself to wooden utensils, none of them larger than a spinning-wheel. He has, he says, only one predecessor in the field, though his bibliography might have referred to pioneers like Gertrude Jekyll. But his own book, within its chosen limits, is a treasure for antiquarians and craftsmen. Industrial designers will probably 'adapt' the exquisite contours of some hundreds of museum and collectors' pieces illustrated; while the rest of us hope that England may feel sufficiently inspired by so noble a tribute as to emulate Wales in establishing a museum of Peasant Art—the category to which the greater part of the book's contents

belongs. Such a museum might become the centre of a real revival by showing craftsmanship in action—especially the work of the old lathe, dominated by and not dominating its owner.

More than any hoard of pictures and statues, these platters and bowls, ladles and ginger-bread moulds, tobacco-jars, chess-men and love-tokens exhibit a way of life. It is a life essentially home-abiding. Even the long winter evenings were obviously welcomed for the fireside leisure that gave the home a chance to win back on the exacting fields and enrich itself in its turn. The woodcrafts were moreover ancillary to nearly all the other crafts: to cooking, to weaving, to lace-making as well as to dairying and preserving food. Very little has been overlooked here. The crook and the *shillelagh* are missed among the walking-sticks. A fine account of the maple-wood 'mazer' omits the 'mazard bowl' from which the sin-eater of the Welsh Marches drank when he took over a dead man's trespasses across his coffin. But the folk-lore of 'treen' deserves a book to itself.

HELEN PARRY EDEN.

ENGLISH TOWN CRAFTS. By Norman Wymer. (Batsford; 15s.)

To write up three dozen town crafts intelligently in 124 pages is an undertaking few people could do better than Norman Wymer, who rendered a similar service in his *English Country Crafts*; but only at the sacrifice of detail needed to supplement the excellent Batsford photographs. The superb picture, for example, of a lace-maker's hands adjusting her Pins, merits a paragraph of explanation which is not there. The book is written from the library rather than from the bench, but the author fails too often to see the wood for the trees. 'Way back in the 6th and 7th centuries they (the people of England) might be heard chanting their weird Latin chants that Pope Gregory had brought to Canterbury' hardly indicates the glories of Plain Song; nor is the 'religious fervour' of the early guilds adequately explained by saying that 'the members of these fraternities would stick together through thick and thin, praying for one another's souls on every conceivable occasion, holding masses in homage to their dead, and raising funds to provide the most exquisite funeral palls in their honour'. A craft involves exactness in detail and should be written of in exact language.

H. D. C. P.

INSIGHT AND OUTLOOK: An Inquiry into the Common Foundations of Science, Art and Social Ethics. By Arthur Koestler. (Macmillan; 25s.)

The growth from self-assertiveness to society-service has roots deeper than deliberation, for living processes display tendencies to form wholes apparently closer to the nature of things than any private impulse to kill; indeed parallel motions exist in the organic world. From such principles of integration, illustrated with a wealth