

SCHOOL DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION. By J. A. Godfrey and R. Castle Cleary. (The Architectural Press; 36s.)

This is a book for architects, and for those referred to in the publisher's blurb as 'educationists', who may find themselves involved, without previous specialized experience, in the design of new schools.

The first two chapters are devoted to necessarily brief accounts of the development of the educational system in Great Britain and of the design of schools. In the next part of the book the authors discuss site requirements and the planning of nursery, primary and secondary schools. In each of these three sections a general discussion of planning requirements is followed by detailed consideration of each individual room or department, illustrated by a generous supply of plans and photographs. There is, too, much useful information in tabulated form, and references are given to relevant Ministry of Education Building Bulletins and other official publications.

The last part of the book is devoted to discussion of functional requirements, construction and equipment. In a specialized study such as this, it may be thought hardly necessary to have devoted several pages to a general dissertation on the design of foundations; but this is a small criticism of a section which gives much useful advice and information on the practical aspects of school building.

In reading through this useful and well-made book, one is left with one rather disquieting impression from the repetition of such phrases as 'the latter theory is the one which holds the field at present' (p. 124). All through the book there occurs this evidence of experiment and uncertainty, and the reader may perhaps be excused the suspicion that the educational field is one in which theorists (some, less kind, would call them 'cranks') have been striving after constantly changing visions of perfection, and in doing so have been able to use children as guinea-pigs for their experiments.

On the other hand, it is comforting to learn that the approach of the Ministry of Education to the design of school buildings has become more human and less clinical than in the immediate post-war years. Its previous concern about fixed standards of lighting, heating and ventilation, has been the authors tell us, tempered by the realization that 'the child, in fact, is the basis of design and his need for a friendly, stimulating building which provides ample space for his manifold activities, while still being reasonable in cost, must be met'.

It must now be apparent that a purely functional approach to school design is not enough. Light and airy classrooms and adequate recreation space are good and necessary things, but cannot of themselves produce happy and well-balanced human beings. The surroundings of the school are important—and receive in this book the full discussion

they deserve. But, as the authors point out, it is not every school that can be built in a cherry orchard, as was one at St Albans by C. H. Aslin, the Hertfordshire County Architect. In many urban school sites the surroundings will be dull or even grim, and in such cases it is particularly important that attention be paid to the interior, where a careful use of colour and the texture of materials can do much to counteract the severity which almost inevitably results from the extreme simplicity of design and construction made necessary by financial stringency. Sculpture and mural painting too can play their part, and at a cost far less than is generally realized; for throughout the country there are artists of ability, often little known even in their own neighbourhood, who are prepared to work for a craftsman's wage.

The planning requirements discussed in this book are, of course, those of the 1944 Act, which so enormously increased the accommodation required at every level, thus raising the cost of the schools and putting a double burden on the managers of the voluntary schools. That such improved standards are desirable can scarcely be questioned; but to what degree they are essential, and what degree of flexibility should be exercised in applying them to existing schools, must remain matters for individual opinion. On these, as on other controversial issues of the moment, the authors of this book wisely maintain a strict neutrality.

DONOVAN PURCELL

## NOTICES

FROM Pelican Books come some valuable reprints in Helen Waddell's *WANDERING SCHOLARS* (2s. 6d.) and Oliver Simon's *INTRODUCTION TO TYPOGRAPHY* (3s. 6d.). Miss Waddell's classic is now twenty-seven years old and has lost none of the freshness and delight that marked its first appearance. As a Pelican it should make many new friends. Mr Simon's authoritative handbook on typography has gone through five impressions in eight years in its original form—sufficient proof of its usefulness and its readability. Now made available in a much cheaper form, it will prove valuable to all concerned with the printed word—and that includes readers, who are too often unaware of the fascination of the processes that they take for granted but which have an importance and beauty in their own right.

F. T. Giles's *THE CRIMINAL LAW* (Pelican Books, 2s. 6d.) is a newly-written survey of the English criminal law, and forms a valuable companion to his earlier Pelican book, *The Magistrates' Courts*. Mr Giles naturally writes with authority (he is Chief Clerk at the Clerkenwell Magistrates' Court), but he has, too, a humane and humorous