

## REVIEWS

Lanherne, Darlington, and Chichester, the Bridgettines of Syon, and the Dominicans of Carisbrooke, has been written elsewhere at some length, but the advantage of grouping the history of all of them in one volume is manifest.      WALTER GUMBLEY, O.P.

## MISCELLANEOUS

WHAT'S THE USE OF ART ANYWAY? By A. K. Coomaraswamy and Others. (America, John Stevens, Newport, Rhode Island; 50 cents.)

This book consists of six broadcast talks sponsored by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts of which Dr. Coomaraswamy is Curator of the Eastern Department. If they were listened to attentively (which is difficult to imagine in England) they must have given the "art lovers" who heard them something to chew and it is to be hoped that such listeners were suitably shocked out of their art loving. In our opinion the second talk, "Art for Art's Sake," by the enlightened doctor himself, is by far the most important, though the others are useful and salutary. For the fact is that the question which gives the title to the series is not really relevant in our Capitalist society and it is only in the second talk that there is a thorough appreciation of the fact. If all production be for profit, as in a Capitalist society it is and necessarily must be, there is really no more to be said. What pays? That is the only relevant question. The second talk, therefore, is important because, though it does not touch on the political implications of the dilemma, clearly exposes the contemporary "art" business "as part and parcel of the whole bourgeois fantasy." "Love of art," in fact, in our society can be "no more than a sentimental aberration and means of escape from the serious business of life"—from the business, that is to say (and the word "business" now means nothing else), of producing things for profit, money-making and more particularly money-lending. It is no use (because in the nature of things it can have no effect) addressing oneself to capitalists or supporters of capitalism. The only useful thing, the only thing from which a result may be justly expected, is to address the other people, the victims, the rebels, the exploited, the dispossessed, the wage-slaves—for the future lies with them. And, in this connection, it is of the first importance to point out to them that in no matter are they more fatuous, more sheepish, more completely duped and doped, than in this matter of culture—art and beauty, museums and picture-galleries and concert halls. As politicians they have rejected the bourgeois theory of capital, but as men and women they accept the whole current delusion of culture. And nothing is more pitifully illustrative of this sheepishness than their acceptance of the cultural "values" of the bourgeoisdom

## BLACKFRIARS

which they profess to reject and their repudiation of the religious doctrine which a capitalist society of its nature (whatever lip-service it may think it "pays" to render to it) also repudiates. In brief, capitalism is naturally atheistic and naturally prone to worship "art and beauty," and our reformers compete with the bourgeois in an effort to be equally "cultured" and have embraced atheism, though with much less hypocrisy yet even more fervour.

In the capitalist world of production for profit the idea of art (the responsible application of human intelligence, sensibility and skill to human making) has been divorced from the idea of work and the idea of the beautiful from the idea of the useful. It is no use whatever telling our masters about this and, until they are in a position to act upon it, very little use telling the victims. The political thing is now paramount. Nevertheless such essays as these will not be wasted. Here and there the right people will read them and in any case they can, we hope, be kept in cold storage until such time as the criticism they present becomes relevant.

ERIC GILL.

SECOND BOOK OF SHORT ORGAN INTERLUDES FOR LITURGICAL USE. By Dom Gregory Murray, O.S.B., M.A., F.R.C.O. (Organist and Choirmaster of Downside Abbey.) (Rushworth & Dreaper; 2/6.)

It is now just over a year since Dom Gregory published his first book of organ voluntaries, and this second one lives up to the reputation so justly earned by its predecessor. The composer's aim is the same in both books, namely, to provide suitable pieces for filling in those short gaps in liturgical services which most organists find so awkward. If anything he has achieved his purpose with even greater success in this second book. All the pieces have a very definite affinity to Plainchant and thus qualify as suitable church music. The simplicity yet consistent freshness of the melodies, the smooth progression and well-tempered austerity of the harmonies, all bear the impress of Gregorian chant in its purest forms. The pieces avoid both extremes of pompous elaborate harmony and infantile dabbling with chords; they are simple and unobtrusive and at the same time full-blooded and virile. In all this the composer has very successfully achieved his aim. And the merit of this achievement will be realized when we reflect that of the finest church music produced very little can be said to approach adequately the style of "the highest model of sacred music—the Gregorian Chant." Dom Gregory has succeeded in no small measure of perfection, and has produced a style which may yet become a tradition of music as yet very much neglected, though the need for it has long been felt.