

THE NINETEENTH HOLE OF EUROPE. By Vivian Connell. (Secker and Warburg; 5s.)

There is grandeur and beauty in this last, despairing cry of honest naturalism. The author depicts in dramatic form (fine, tense drama, with unforgettable lines and clearly defined characters) a plague-stricken, devastated Europe, cut off from the rest of the world by a wall of fire and by seas over which no ships are allowed to come, after a war 'that nobody could win, and everybody lost.' The primitive needs of the flesh, food and sex, and liquor to blot out the memory of the past and create an illusion of happiness in the present, are by far the most important elements in the lives of these half-crazy remnants of a ruined civilisation. Nevertheless humanity contrives, pitifully and clumsily, to reassert itself, notably through the presence of a young girl, Nada, whose only memory of the old Europe is the crash of the bomb that killed her mother. She is seen as 'the ghost of beauty haunting this cemetery of the world,' with the windows of Chartres in her eyes.

The power of the author's writing and the limitations of his philosophy are best illustrated by Mark's evocation of the past:

Yet, we have burned down all Europe to roast a few rogues. There was a simpler way. . . . Yes, there was much to remember. Horses that galloped on the green sward with jockeys flashing like kingfishers in the sunlight. Paintings that looked out at your mortal eyes with their immortal eyes. Music that caught the vanished Babylons out of the air and builded them again in your mind. And women, beautiful women, of whom you are the ghost. Beautiful women who had wisdom, and beautiful women who had no more wisdom than the rose and needed none more. Beautiful women who sat in the Ritz and dallied with Time, with great ruby drops of Solomon's blood hanging on the lobes of their ears, imperishable on the perishable snow. Yes, even the Lady in the Ritz

She had a Martini, the Lady in the Ritz,
And the ghost of Helen put on flesh,
And the sunlight over Troy
Died in the bottom of her cocktail glass.

'The sunlight died,' 'the ghost of Helen': already civilisation had become decadent, empty and vain. Save by a welcome accident, the paintings, the music, the truly beautiful women were not of Mark's generation, as they are not of ours. Nor was there a way to restore them so simple as he had hoped.

For the lovely women, the noble artistic achievements, even the galloping horses with their flashing jockeys, were only possible in a civilisation formed out of the struggle of supernatural heroism with diabolical evil. That is why the action in this play is some-

times as revolting as the lines are beautiful. And the fact that to most playgoers it would mean nothing more than a certain natural coarseness is an indication of the distance we have to travel before we can finally abandon the ghosts, return to the reality of divine beauty, and revive the faith and love that built Chartres.

EDWARD QUINN.

FAITH AND WORKS. By Lionel Curtis (Oxford University Press; 2s.)

When a job of tidying-up has to be done outside the confines of our own homesteads the trite objection of idlers and procrastinators is: 'We must first set our own house in order.' But *Faith and Works*, by Lionel Curtis, can in no way be condemned as an excuse for inaction merely because it urges that our best contribution to the permanent unity of the optimistically styled 'United' Nations would be to make the British Commonwealth a truly united Empire, the stabilising factor without which the 'wider system of general security' promised in the Atlantic Charter could not endure.

This is a call for the formation of a genuine international government for common affairs on no matter how small a scale, in the belief that 'the successive inclusion of nations outside it will be merely a question of time, and may reach its completion more quickly than we can picture.' The election of a joint parliament by the peoples of the British Commonwealth to look after their common affairs would be but a commencement, for the author declares: 'The problem of security for the United Nations will only be solved when the peoples of the American and British Commonwealths have merged their resources under one organic government charged with their common defence. . . This will in time lead to a world government.'

This sober but brilliantly argued plea by one who has devoted the greater part of a lifetime to the enrichment of our Imperial heritage cannot be confused with the clumsy proposals occasionally mooted on one side or other of the Atlantic; that we and the Dominions should become just a few more stars in Uncle Sam's spangled banner, or that the errant American Colonies should return to their Motherland whence they were driven by the tyranny of a German despot, George III. of England. On the contrary, all the participants in the proposed international government would remain supreme in their own national spheres, and the sovereignty of the international parliament would extend only in the sphere of affairs common to all the partners (mainly defence, foreign policy, and control of inter-State aviation). The plan aims to lay 'the burden of controlling the issues of national life and death where alone it can rest with safety, on every citizen of the Commonwealth able to bear it.' This is the new democratic imperialism; it is a call