

Metaphysical. And much of the later verse that can only be said to be in manners of his own seems to me unsatisfactory too. The sharp definition is not there:

Death is indescribably much on me

—there is too much that seems to go with that sort of random shot.

One of the finest poems in the book is the Shakespearian piece, *The Return of Odysseus*, that appeared first in *Scrutiny*.

F.R.L.

*THE READING AND WRITING OF ENGLISH*, by E. G. Biaggini (*Hutchinson*, 4/6).

It is doubtful if many teachers discovered Mr. Biaggini's *English in Australia*. It was not widely advertised or reviewed, and the title did not hint that it was likely to be useful as a class-book. It was, primarily, a sociological enquiry, but the experiments on which the enquiry was based were exercises in practical criticism which could be used profitably in any English school. In the present book, he has used these experiments and their results to point the way to a simple method of training taste.

The method is roughly (it was devised by Mr. Biaggini independently) that of Dr. Richards's *Practical Criticism*. Papers were distributed containing passages for comparison, the students being asked to state a definite preference. The resulting opinions contained all the arguments for or against the passages, and so gave the author an opportunity to examine the usual approaches of the ordinary person when asked for an individual judgment, to point out which of these approaches are relevant, and to analyse the passages, stating his own conclusions. By answering irrelevant objections and emphasising sound arguments, he shows the pupil the correct way in which to approach literature—to concentrate always on the value of the word.

Mr. Biaggini is, as can be seen from the nature of his original experiment, very much alive to the importance of intelligent reading and writing, and the study of English generally, and realizes that

the present state of culture is largely due to ignorance of, and disregard for, those common sense qualities which he seeks to emphasize. What is even more important is that he sees clearly what he wants to do and how to do it. The book is intended for school use, and Mr. Biaggini realizes, very wisely, that it is no use starting off by expecting schoolchildren to distinguish first-class from mediocre—the first step must be to distinguish sense from non-sense, and his results show that ability to do this is not a common achievement. So he contrasts a hack journalist with Cobbett, Wilhelmina Stitch with Edward Thomas, a spoof speech from *Elmer Gantry* with Bunyan. If anyone considers these comparisons childishly simple, let him look at the tables of results, which include not only schoolchildren but third-year University English students, and notice how often the wrong choice is made, and then at the protocols, and see the appallingly ingenuous arguments used to defend that choice. Then, let him remember that teaching is not merely a matter of starting at the beginning, but of continually returning to the beginning to make sure that we're still on the right track, and haven't forgotten where we started from. Mr. Biaggini has kept this fact in mind ; obviously, he had to.

Some minor objections might be made to his choice of passages: it would be fairly easy to make out a case against the Baldwin passage that he gives as an example of sincerity and plainness. But the passage is not actually bad, and the second-rate must play an important part in anyone's development. Again, the section on the writing of English is rather disappointing, and has the air of an afterthought. What it says is sound enough, but it doesn't say much. I have never yet found a book which is really helpful in teaching others to write and I think Mr. Biaggini realizes the difficulties.

I do, however, recommend the book thoroughly to all English teachers who realize the importance of training taste, and don't quite know where to begin. The book is practical and is seldom likely to be above the heads of a senior form—say 14 onwards. It is written by a man who knows the immense difficulties of teaching, and who has not been discouraged by them, or turned to an easy-going acquiescence.

FRANK CHAPMAN.

*PROPAGANDA AND THE NEWS*, by Will Irwin (McGraw-Hill, 12/6).

Much of the material in this book is available elsewhere, and nothing new arises from its collocation here: but under present conditions such matter can hardly be reprinted too often. The author is an American journalist of long experience. This gave him the chance of being behind the scenes when dirty work was going on during the war and after, but it hasn't provided him with the detachment and standards which would have helped him to draw conclusions from his interesting evidence. Apart from the title, the book reads like a history of journalism with special reference to America and the war and post war periods. Mr. Irwin traces the growth of the press and its acquisition of liberty in a rather Told-through-the-ages manner, and gives a good account of one Bennett, who seems to have been an early American prototype of Northcliffe. He invented the interview, and exploited 'human interest' as early as 1835: 'a super-reporter he remained to the end of his days. Only in his later years did he become interested in changing the trend of public affairs. At first dimly, then more clearly as he gathered confidence, he perceived that journalism had left to private gossip a hundred interesting aspects of life . . . ' Competition caused his methods to be followed in America, and eventually in England.

But except for the war-period, there is not much information about the extent to which news is influenced by propaganda, conscious or unwitting. He states for instance on p. 35 that in English journalism 'there arose a tradition which, however commendable in some respects, amounted to another brake on the press. Always the newspapers must play the game of the Foreign Office. Always they must tune the news to the diplomatic necessities of the moment. There is little compulsion about the process—simply an unofficial social sanction.' There is some very interesting evidence of that relation, and it is a pity Mr. Irwin did not avail himself of it.

The chapters on government propaganda during the war are useful. Here the Germans were pioneers. In the west they tried to create distrust of Great Britain in the French mind, and in the east to disintegrate imperialist Russia by propagandising discontented elements. Many of the Jews in Germany who have suffered from the Nazis must have been attracted into the country by appeals