

Marina or *East Coker* to mind here isn't to convince oneself that Mr. Eliot's critical practice has been improved by being brought into conformity with his poetic practice.

The worst, then, that one can fairly say of Mr. Hayward's selection is that he has accepted a *fait accompli*. If generalization is to become Mr. Eliot's critical métier, then this is merely a fitting garland in his honour; but to those who ten years ago thought him the most distinguished critic that English literature had seen for over a century, it will seem a poor funeral wreath.

R. O. C. WINKLER.

IDEALS AND ILLUSIONS, by L. Susan Stebbing (Watts, 8/6).

This is 'popular philosophy' only in the sense that it is, as the publishers claim, a book for everyman. There is no claptrap, uplift, or false simplification about it. It shows in fact how hard it is to say when a discussion is 'philosophical' and when it is not. For instance, Professor Stebbing makes telling criticisms of what might be called the philosophical framework of Carr's *Twenty Years Crisis*, and her examination has made me feel that in reading that in many ways admirable book, I had been superficial in discounting the deficiencies Professor Stebbing exposes, with the reflection that after all Carr didn't profess to be a philosopher, and one couldn't expect everything. For it is precisely the same qualities of keen insight and careful analysis which Carr exercises elsewhere on the international scene between the wars which he lamentably fails to bring into play in the passages which Professor Stebbing justly describes as nonsensical. And there seems no good reason why he should be excused for talking nonsense about political theory just because it is international relations that he is paid for knowing about. If Carr's flounderings are less fatal to his argument as a whole than one might expect, it is only because all that argument requires could be summarized in two or three commonplaces. (The political philosopher, as Mr. Plamenatz remarked a few years ago in an excellent book¹ must not be afraid of commonplaces, and it is one of Professor Stebbing's merits that she never goes out of her way to avoid them.)

If the first chapter of the book exemplifies the relevance of

¹*Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation*.

philosophical precision to thought on topics not strictly philosophical, the third chapter, entitled *The Need for Reflection*, acts as a sort of complement to it, arguing that there is a place for academic detachment in moral philosophy. The reproach of splitting hairs, as she says, 'carries a sting only when it can be shown that the detachment is unwarranted and that what is split really is a hair and not a tangled skein.' This chapter consists of a close examination of a passage from a recent book by the Master of Balliol, and acutely diagnoses both the author's muddled thinking, and the 'attractive air of bluff breeziness' which cloaks it.

So far I have mentioned only Professor Stebbing's polemical passages, and they form a large part of the book, whose plan is that of an examination of 'what we believe to be the ends for which it is worth while to live,' carried out in a spirit of exploration and clarification, mainly through the analysis of extracts from recent writings bearing on the subject. The author in her last few pages has forestalled any attempt at a summary of the argument, and indeed such a sober and unspectacular discussion, aiming at 'definite specification,' does not show to advantage in summary. Professor Stebbing has not much to say that is new, but *Ideals and Illusions* is a piece of sound workmanship, and the more closely argued parts of it, such as chapter 8, a digression on linguistic pitfalls and on the nature of conscience, would provide an excellent starting-point for further study and reflection. If one seems to have read some of the more general passages rather too often before, it is certainly better to be honestly conventional than to strive for originality and cleverness, especially in moral and political philosophy. I feel a slight disappointment that so much hard and honest thinking should not have got a little further, but the progress it does make it along the right way even if is a well-worn way. Every now and then, too, one is rewarded by some remark which, in its very unobtrusiveness, bears the mark of something maturely cogitated and in its turn calls for leisurely digestion. One instance will serve, though it ought really to be read in its context: 'Most reflective people are prone to over-simplify, not by the simple process of leaving out a great deal as unreflective people do, but by finding common characters which are, however, less significant than the diversities we conceal by using abstract nouns.'

J. C. MAXWELL.

THE CONCISE 'C.H.E.L.'

THE CONCISE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, by George Sampson (Cambridge University Press, 15/-).

This is certainly a remarkable tome; the blurb proudly announces the facts—the whole story from Beowulf to T. E. Lawrence, 1,100 pages for 15/-. Obviously a criticism of the views expressed is hardly called for, any more than one now criticises the hansom cab. But undoubtedly a review of the undertaking raises a number of interesting, if baffling, queries.

The Concise History is based in detail on the famous Cambridge History. While behaving towards its parent body with every filial obedience, the new work 'includes certain modifications necessitated by the fact that some of the original chapters were written over thirty years ago.' Thus there are amendments throughout; and there is also a new and original chapter on modern authors. As this final chapter 'occasionally ventures into criticism,' it will be here, presumably, that the test of the first fourteen chapters must be made; this criticism should grow naturally out of the scholarship which went to the making of the original volumes, and no less to Mr. Sampson's epitome.

But, of course, if it proves impossible to keep opinion (for that is what Mr. Sampson means by criticism) out of a chapter on the moderns, it must be equally impossible elsewhere, whatever the pretensions. And so, for all Mr. Sampson's show of impartial scholarship, for all his no doubt genuine ambition to reproduce the spirit of the original, the new History is if anything fundamentally more vehement in the expression of its likes and dislikes than the old. One or two comparisons between the two will enforce this judgment. Of Pope:

The Cambridge History:—'. . . the question is one of temperament. Those who, while not responding readily to violent emotions, are keenly interested in men and manners, but with a chastened passion for green fields, who can appreciate satire and epigram and have a nice sense of finish, will, in every age, enjoy the poetry of Pope for its own sake.'