

# EUROPE'S CULTURAL TRADITION

*THE EUROPEAN INHERITANCE*, edited by Sir Ernest Barker, Sir George Clark and Professor Paul Vaucher; Oxford University Press, Geoffrey Cumberlege. English price 3 volumes £5 5/-, separate volumes 42/-.

(Reviewed by F. L. W. Wood)

THESE remarkable volumes will prove of considerable value, though not, one suspects, in the precise direction originally planned. A sound and balanced analysis of the European inheritance was a project conceived in discussions among the Ministers of Education of Governments-in-Exile active in London during the war. The notion was to have something to present to newly-freed peoples conveying the core of the inheritance for which the United Nations conceived themselves to be fighting. The editors hope that these volumes have achieved this purpose and that they will be widely read among senior school boys and junior University students both in England and abroad.

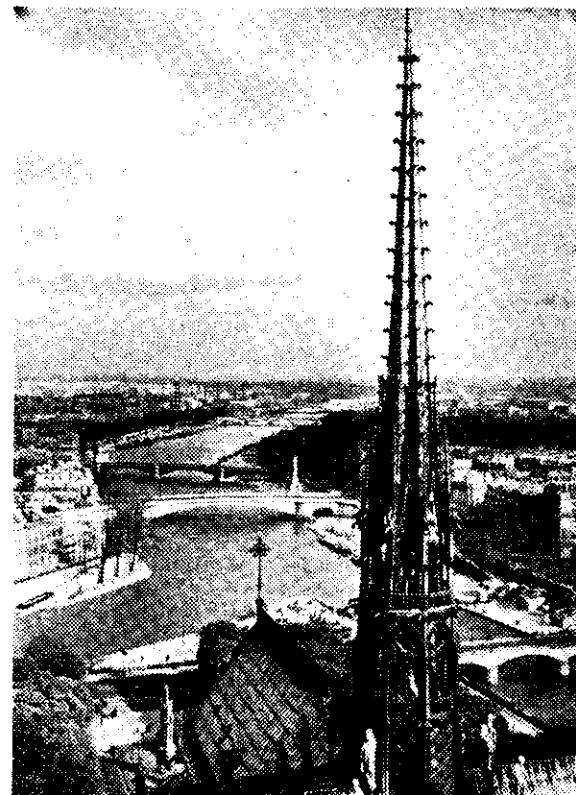
One can echo the hope, and yet feel that there are two serious obstacles in the way. The first is price. To one ignorant of the economics of the book trade, five guineas sterling sounds a solid price for most students, and even for most libraries which serve the needs of

students. The second obstacle relates to the character of the book. The main text at times presents a brilliant synthesis of recent thinking, and the writing is sometimes mature, witty and allusive. There is, however, a fair charge of straight super-textbook material stuffed with facts, and competing with standard textbooks rather than introducing new lines of thought or sources of information. The work accordingly tends to fall between two stools. It is neither an interpretative essay, nor an adequate factual summary.

It nevertheless succeeds in presenting a vivid picture of European cultural tradition. This is primarily through wise choice of contributors. Ten very eminent men, steeped in that tradition, have collaborated in the plan, and each of them stands out clearly both in his scholarly technique, and in his personality and cast of mind. Here, then, we have ten "good Europeans" in action, living, as well as talking about, their inheritance. Some of these men, moreover, are quite inadequately known to English readers. The great Belgian medievalist, Ganshof, for example, has been little translated: he gives here a summary of the middle ages which is admirable except at points where he has remembered too vividly his obligation to give some coverage to an impos-

sibly wide field. Little of Daniel Mornet's brilliant work has been translated. He is a master of the arts of synthesis and vulgarisation in which French scholarship traditionally excels. His section in Volume II is a characteristically pungent survey of 18th Century culture. Paul Vaucher is better known. He has served in London as well as Paris. Here he writes with solid competence on 18th Century politics. Professor Dodd gives an account of the emergence in Israel of a "genuinely ethical religion," and the formation of early Christianity which is fascinating in its economy of words and its balance of judgment. Sir George Clark, when he breaks from chronology, throws light into some corners of the early modern period which are shunned by

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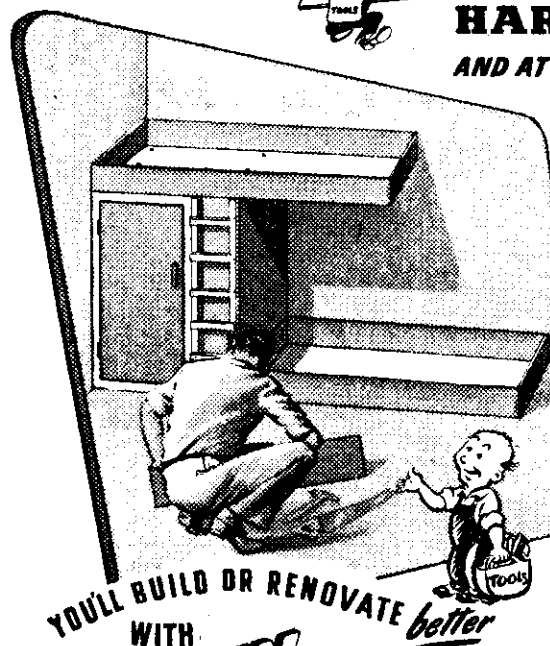
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