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BOOKS

(continued from previous page)

less plundering of the earth. These books have almost all produced violent controversy. Some people have opposed them because their conclusions are uncomfortable, some because they often tend to ignore politics or economics, and some because of a simple belief in science which it is held will come to the world's aid and give everybody three good meals a day.

S. Chandrasekhar, who is a professor of economics and a former Unesco expert on population problems, comes down on the other side. He repeats the fact that roughly half the world's population, "most of them in Asia, will go to bed hungry tonight," that is, if they have a bed; and he goes on to show that the phrase "poverty in the midst of plenty" is—for the world as a whole—dangerous nonsense. There's poverty, but no plenty. And the population of India goes up by five million a year and the world as a whole by 25 million. In 1950 the world's population was about 2,400,000,000. By the year 2000 at the present rate of increase, it would be 4,200,000,000.

Dr. Chandrasekhar bluntly says that there's a limit to exploitation of this planet, and that he doesn't believe that the Sahara Desert will be turned into a wheatfield or the Arctic "thawed into a tropical paradise." And, even if these things happened, the people of Asia (where the poverty and the population are) would not share in that wheatfield or that tropical paradise.

His main solution is "widespread dissemination of contraceptive knowledge"—it would be, he says, "infinitely wiser to prevent unwanted 'immigration from heaven' than to kill them off in overpopulated countries with an atom bomb." He adds that the world also needs the grant of political freedom to all colonial peoples, planned international migration, rapid large-scale industrialisation and intensive agricultural development.

There's much to argue about, and the book itself is refreshingly written, but I think a majority would agree that planned migration will not be a central part of the solution until somebody finds out how to make the world's empty lands economically productive.

—W.B.S.

MASTER OF STYLE

SELECTED POEMS, by T. S. Eliot; Faber and Faber, English price 7/6.

THIS book of Eliot's shorter poems contains nothing we have not seen before. It omits several of his New Eng-

land poems. Yet it is a necessary acquisition for any bookshelf where the work it contains has not yet found a place. On reading (or re-reading) these poems one can see clearly why Eliot has had a major formative influence upon the development of English and American poetry of this century. The answer does not lie in originality of content or a totally new treatment of the material that has come to the poet's hand. Many Georgian poets (Harold Monro, or at an opposite pole, D. H. Lawrence) had illuminated for us the bric-a-brac of personal experience; many had written lucidly and rhetorically. But they lacked one thing, style.

Eliot's private statements assume in the reader's mind the stature of general statements about spiritual reality mainly because every phrase and echo in his verse conveys from the beginning an impression of dispassionate maturity, of a mind native to the analytical tradition of Western culture. A code of manners to him is a subsidiary division of a code of ethics; and more important, a guide to the labyrinth of the modern world. His true progenitor is not Dante but Henry James. The delusion that society can make its members happy never occurs to him; nor the more profound delusion that men can exist meaningfully outside society. Passion expressed within the social forms (as in "Prufrock") is irony, the wound, in Eliot's own later language, by which what is eternal drains away into time—

I have watched the moment of my greatness flicker.

I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker.

And in short, I was afraid.

As the prophet and the seer of "The Rock" and "Ash Wednesday" Eliot has great virtues, which could only be discussed at considerable length. But he has set a balanced and elastic style (so simple a gift, it would seem) before the eyes of his barbaric contemporaries, to drive them to envy and despair.

—James K. Baxter

HOPE FOR THE CHILDLESS

NEW FACTS FOR THE CHILDLESS, by Lawrence Galton; Victor Gollancz, English price 13/6.

MR. GALTON has succeeded in that deceptively difficult task: writing a "popular" book on an aspect of medicine. In an age of popularisation too many such books persist in condescending in their language and presentation of material as though their readers were not quite literate. This book is as concise as its subject allows, and makes a positive contribution to the layman's—and possibly the general practitioner's—understanding of the complexities of fertility.

New Facts for the Childless arms childless couples with the information and perspective to help them make best use of skilled medical advice. Sub-fertility—not sterility—in both husband and wife, for instance, is a frequent reason for childlessness. The account of how both partners if necessary can be treated, and what a specialist will look for and why, turns the problem of barrenness into an opportunity for medical detective work. Many couples will never have children. But the author documents evidence showing that up to 50 per cent of the apparently barren can be helped.

This book is not, on its own figures, a treatise for the few. The total number of the unwilling childless exceeds the number of sufferers from cancer and tuberculosis. If one adds the anxious parents of the only child, the numbers of those wanting help in this special field are considerable indeed.

—C.



T. S. ELIOT, O.M. BBC photo

N.Z. LISTENER, JANUARY 21, 1955.