

PITT VERSUS FOX, FATHER AND SON, 1735-1806. By Eric Eyck. Translated by Eric Northcott. (Bell; 21s.)

This well set-up book is a competent translation of a German work. The author is well-known as a biographer of Bismarck and a legal journalist. He is deeply read in English eighteenth-century history, and provides us here with a complete account of the two Pitts and the two Foxes, fathers and sons, dove-tailing the four lives into a single volume, and covering the years 1735 to 1806. There is nothing very new, but the reader is simply and skilfully given the facts, and an entertaining and readable story is the result. Yet the writer too markedly falls under the spell of the 'Whig historians', and imbibes their strong prejudices. The younger Fox is almost deified, and the young Pitt can do little that is right. As for George III, he is the villain of the piece, so that the viewpoint seems to be that of an American school-teacher in the Middle West a generation or so ago. This is a pity, for times are changed, and there has been a reaction since the late Sir John Fortescue wrote his brilliant articles in *The Times*, and published the *Letters of George III*. The king has come into his own again. Many are now convinced that he fought his battles honestly and bravely and patriotically, and not unconstitutionally; and that though he was again and again wrong, his people were with him every time. He stood for the nation; the Whigs who opposed him were an insignificant and factious minority.

R.B.

THE CURIOUS TRAVELLER. By H. J. Massingham. (Collins; 12s. 6d.)

Alert as ever to the elements of the good life, Mr H. J. Massingham is at pains in all his books—and particularly in these exploratory diaries—to relate all his impressions, however fleeting, to 'the more permanent things of our life on earth'. Month by month as roofless factories are imposed on local workshops; pit-props, urban water works and bombing-sites on farms and sheep-walks; opencast collieries on cornfields; everywhere the unnecessary town on the necessary country; he marvels how we are to keep body and soul together in a world which does not want to grow food any more than we do. So he takes every opportunity of visiting, with the enthusiasm of a fellow-worker and the humility of a learner, those who in small or large ways are striving to keep life alive. They are small enough, as a rule. You have to keep small to dodge the fine mesh of the industrial net. But 'every man is a special kind of artist'—smiths, farmers, small-holders, thatchers, weavers, woodturners, shepherds, potters: all 'peasants of a fuller culture' who, often at great material cost to themselves, and usually at their own risk, have kept faith with nature and shunned the superstition of technology. A dozen districts of England and Wales are

laid under contribution by this heartening book; which, for all who would lend head or hand, in however inconspicuous and piecemeal a fashion, to repair our disintegrated outlook and ravaged soil, should act as a refresher course in sanity.

H.P.E.

WESSEX: Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire, with West Berkshire and East Somerset. By Ralph Dutton. (Batsford; 12s. 6d.)

Those who love the English tradition, countryside and architecture, are very deeply in the debt of Messrs. Batsford. Were England to be wiped out, either by catastrophe, or by increasing industrialism and 'planning', and the War Office determination to devastate the most beautiful places, then—supposing a set of Batsford illustrated books survived—it would still be possible to get some idea of what Great Britain used to be like, in those past days when there was time for craftsmanship and worship, those antique times when men found more joy in building a Cathedral than a factory.

It is a large slice of England that Mr Dutton has undertaken in his 'Wessex', which so long ago was one of the Seven Kingdoms of the Heptarchy. Topographical writing is a difficult art, and the fact that it is done so easily and so badly by many people, does not make it less so. But Mr Dutton has the necessary knowledge, imagination and sensitive perception to do it well. He moves smoothly from place to place and from one period of history to another, and thus avoids the horrid jerkiness and the still more horrid facetiousness that disfigures so many country books.

What Mr Dutton sees—such an English rural picture as 'The Cottages of Britford are scattered along the lanes, and the fourteenth-century Church and Georgian vicarage lie with a Tudor farmhouse close to the banks of the river'—he can make his readers see also. Add to this the many and enchanting photographs which adorn this book in the usual lavish Batsford manner, and there is Wessex in one's hand in the most compact and convenient way possible.

ESTHER MEYNELL.

CANTERBURY. By William Townsend. (Batsford; 8s. 6d.)

Few English cities are more saturated with historical associations than Canterbury, which for nearly a thousand years was the centre of Abbey, numerous lesser religious houses, hospitals and a score of parish churches combined to produce a scene of religious activity which must have been outstanding even in Catholic times. The shrine of St Thomas was the most famous place of pilgrimage in the British Isles, to which flocked pilgrims not only from this country but, also,