

text of European civilization. While he does justice to all of them with academic objectivity, he is no detached and uncommitted observer but is at pains to separate the sheep from the goats. Those who have made constructive contributions to the radical humanist tradition are approved: Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill are 'sheet-anchors of sanity'; T. H. Green was 'the greatest liberal political philosopher of his age'; Comte, for all his extravagances and crudities, did produce the 'first sign of an alliance between political thought and sociology'; Acton was oracular and far-sighted; Jaurès' 'broad vitality was alien to national and class hate'; 'with Durkheim the mysterious tides of society . . . now began to be systematically and scientifically examined'; even the encyclicals of Leo XIII are counted unto righteousness. To the outer darkness are consigned such as Hegel, Carlyle, Marx-Engels, Treitschke, Sorel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Yet the fact remains that these latter, far more than the 'approved authors', have shaped the world events of the past hundred years. Their myths have been far more potent than the polite myth of 'a basic instinct for mutual aid' to which Mr Bowle makes appeal in his moderately optimistic conclusion. At the beginning of this book he scarifies the middle-class Romantics for their belief in the nobility and grandeur of the common people; it may be that he himself has succumbed a little to an uncritical belief in the redeeming skill of the sociologist and the power of mass communications and statistical techniques of the social psychologist.

JOHN FITZSIMONS

THE ITALIAN ELEMENT IN MILTON'S VERSE. By F. T. Prince. (Oxford University Press; 12s. 6d.)

The author's attention, in this short book, to questions of pure literary technique is expressed with a polished delicacy of word and phrasing which will give pleasure even to readers who are not specialists in the matter. But specialists in particular will be grateful for this excellent study of an important aspect of Milton's verse, its links with Italian poetic technique, which has never, I believe, been other than superficially treated before. A poet himself, Mr Prince brings a trained ear and taste, unusual in scholars, to the niceties of his subject.

Milton is the supreme stylist among English poets, in the sense that he is the great master of studied deliberate eloquence. This mastery of stately and brilliant form—which it is small-minded to disparage in a poet—was classical of course in origin, but more immediately it was Milton's elaboration of influences from the Italian Cinquecento. Literary Italian, in his day 'the most polished vernacular in Europe', Milton knew well; but as a writer he got more from Tasso and Della Casa than from Dante or even Petrarch. There are interesting reasons for this.

Tasso's work was, for Milton, the chief example in a modern tongue of the 'magnificent' style created by Italian poets of the sixteenth century: a style obtained, roughly speaking, by deliberately adding complexity and sonority to the sound and syntax of Italian verse, with a view to bringing it closer to Latin models, and especially to Virgil, than the verse of Dante and Petrarch had been. The process is brilliantly sketched by Mr Prince; who then shows how Milton continued it in English from the early sonnets to its climax in the blank verse of *Paradise Lost*, the 'magnificent' style being transformed meanwhile, and in some ways bettered, by Milton's art and the English idiom in which he worked. Some of the most interesting things that Mr Prince has to say concern the comparison of English and Italian as vehicles for poetry, and this not only in terms of Renaissance prosody. He is excellent too on the rhythm of the Italian hendecasyllabic, and very plausible, at least, about its subtle effect on the Miltonic decasyllabic—concerning which he firmly corrects Robert Bridges.

KENELM FOSTER, O.P.

ENGLAND AND THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE. By J. R. Hale. (Faber and Faber; 21s.)

Mr Hale's book presents a chronicle of English historical conceptions and English taste over a period of three centuries, as they appear in relation to Italian art and history 'between the approximate limits 1250-1550'. Since its subject is really the history of ideas, or rather of one particular idea, that of 'the Renaissance', the survey omits much that its title seems to announce—all that could be called the actual cultural relationship, so immensely important, between Italian and English writers, thinkers, artists, poets and musicians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This real and fruitful relationship, though it has not yet been exhaustively explored, has been worked and re-worked, and the decision to omit it was wise. Mr Hale has exercised a similar discretion in other directions: thus, although he gives a sparkling summary of the conception of Italy characteristic of the Gothic novel, he scarcely touches on the parallel distortion by Elizabethan dramatists, or on the hackneyed reflection of Italian culture in Romantic and Victorian poetry.

The account of the growth of interest in earlier Italian painting, more triumphantly illustrated on the walls of the National Gallery than in any other gallery in the world, reveals vividly the resistance encountered. The national collection was built up in the middle of the nineteenth century, when purchases were necessarily subject to parliamentary scrutiny, and those who had begun to appreciate Italian primitives