

his mettle as a critic of rare distinction. The essay on Milton seems to me to be a finer, and one might add a more temperate, piece of work than the earlier study in *Revaluations* (1936), though perhaps the unduly generous references to Professor Waldo are rather marred by over-eagerness to adduce an 'accepted authority'. The essay on 'Johnson and Augustanism' does much to amplify Dr Leavis's earlier commentary on the eighteenth century, and the summary of Johnson's achievement (p. 104) reveals a power of generalisation which has not been a characteristic of Dr Leavis's criticism; unlike that of Mr Eliot's.

It is when we turn to the essays on D. H. Lawrence that we find Dr Leavis's criticism most unsatisfactory. It is in his dealings with Lawrence that he is continually exposed to the invocation of ultimate criteria, and here that precision of thought that serves him so admirably in detailed local analysis falters, so that he can write: 'I have to record the conviction that the reaction against the world of William Clissold (shall we say?) represented by Mr Eliot's critical writings is, at any rate largely, of the wrong kind. I put it naïvely no doubt, and I will go on to suggest that Lawrence's reaction against the same world (see his review in *Phoenix* of H. G. Wells and relate it to the *Fantasia of the Unconscious*) has much more of rightness in it.' (p. 284.) 'Of rightness', it never amounts to more than that; and if we suggest that it should, it is not because of a failure to appreciate that literary criticism is a specific discipline of intelligence and philosophy another, but because it would seem that if the literary critic is to escape from a world of words he must, in the last analysis, relate the experience which emerges from the discipline he has rightly set himself to some scheme of values which is more precise than 'rightness', 'moral seriousness', and 'spiritual health'. Even in making this point, however, it is difficult not to feel that one probably wouldn't have seen the position in this way if Dr Leavis hadn't supplied, or at least sharpened, the tools of critical analysis, such is the debt of modern literary criticism; it is a debt which I can find no better words to describe than those which Dr Leavis uses of Mr Eliot, 'it is matter of having had incisively demonstrated, for pattern and incitement, what the disinterested and effective application of intelligence to literature looks like, what is the nature of purity of interest, what is meant by the principle . . . that "when you judge poetry it as poetry you must judge it, and not as another thing".'

IAN GREGOR

IN VALLOMBROSA. By David Mathew. (Collins; 10s. 6d.)

There are so many aspects of Dr Mathew's writing that call for admiration—its range, its consistency, its example of industry and wisdom and unfailing resource—that a reviewer can easily be deflected from a simple judgment about the book he has before him. He can

scarcely banish from his mind the author of *The Naval Heritage* or *The Age of Charles I*, still less the Apostolic Delegate with, one supposes, a weight of administrative care which alone would provide a just excuse for a lack of time for writing. But, while these considerations are strictly irrelevant to the criticism of a novel which is emphatically not a bishop's hobby (it could have been fly-fishing or chess) but the work of a writer who might seem to have had all the leisure and detachment in the world to give himself to the problems of a novelist's job, yet they do suggest the secret of its achievement. For Dr Mathew brings to his novels the immense advantage of a serenity which is the fruit of a scholar's objectivity and, even more, of a priestly understanding of the human situation.

The setting is Florence after the last war, and the characters for the most part English men and women. This has the advantage of an economy of construction—a few days in time, a small group of people, a single incident—which allows Dr Mathew to develop his special gift of tolerant observation, of making the present moment in any one of his characters' consciousness a recapitulation of so much that has gone before: persons and places and all the determinants of habit and heredity and a memory to match them. Mrs Hardesty, a rich widow, is to marry Christopher Tremayne, an ineffectual diplomat who failed. There is a best man, a naval officer of exact appreciation of career; there are the English nuns (nostalgic for Lancashire), the lawyer, the ladies who run the finishing school and the impoverished Italian prince. Nothing much happens, except the marriage and the death of Tremayne. But everything happens that matters in the final analysis of what men and women are, and are made for. Here the operations of grace are not violently imposed to solve a novelist's dilemma. They are threads that run through all the coloured pattern of ordinary experience and give it meaning and depth and destiny. Even the repetitive devices of style serve this sustained purpose, and the cool evocative prose is at every point the servant of the situation. Its notable want of verbs is in fact a symbol of its achievement, for *In Vallombrosa* is, so to say, written in verbal nouns: it is not concerned to plan or plot. It brings the steady light of a charitable wisdom and a brilliant observation to bear on a few days in a few people's lives, and that small circle is indeed concentric with the larger range of all human life. You may argue to creation from a grain of sand, and *In Vallombrosa* is about much more than fallen leaves.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

THE PRIEST AS MINISTER OF CONFIRMATION. By E. J. Mahoney. (Burns Oates and Washbourne; 5s.)

This is a commentary on the decree '*Spiritus Sancti*', September 14th, 1946, of the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments. The full text of