

A CENTURY OF BRITISH PAINTING. By Antony Bertram. (The Studio; 12s. 6d.)

This is an excellent book about a strange period of painting by a compelling writer. The period it reviews is from 1851 to 1951 and it is essentially an informative book, almost a text-book. Mr Bertram however has certainly not a text-book mind. He is independent in his judgment, humorous, informed and informal. Above all he is interested in this period without a name and this art without a face. Is it, the casual observer must wonder, an art with a hundred faces or a hundred different kinds of art? A cut, say, from 1451 to 1551 in Italian art would reveal a similar variety of aims and styles, but time has blurred the picture. Artists knowing one another, subject to one another's influence, yet differing in aim and interest, had we feel, a common language whereby to grasp, if not like one another's purpose. But who will get the idea of Henry Moore across to Frederick Lord Leighton who—yes, even he, as a glance at his lectures will reveal—already like Landseer's Sheep Dog uncomprehendingly knew things were not and never would be the same? Leighton is dead, but there were artists whose lives have felt the two influences.

Those bewildered by the last fifty years of art would be more bewildered by the fifty years that went before, were Mr Bertram not their guide. Those with the blood of this strange century in their veins, who, whether they like or dislike individual members of the family, yet understand them, will welcome Mr Bertram as an old friend of the family. His tales of the previous generation will be strange yet familiar, for the history of nineteenth-century art is as exhilarating as our own.

The book is well illustrated, well indexed, rounded off with impressive time charts and synoptic tables of unbelievable comprehension, and, lastly, is supplied with a wide reading list for the uninitiated.

PAUL HARRIS

TUDOR RENAISSANCE. By James Lees-Milne. (Batsford; 21s.)

The massive vulgarity of Tudor art has at last received the scholarly treatment it deserves; for it is impressive, it derives from obscure sources, it is the surviving material expression of one of the formative eras of our history. The opulence of the men who profited from the raw new deal of Henry VIII, the Protectors and Elizabeth, found an outlet in vast buildings; and though there were some extraneous forms, such as miniatures and jewellery, it was in the buildings and their adjuncts that the Tudor Renaissance found its chief expression, in fireplaces and furniture, ceilings and windows, chimney-pots and gatehouses.

Over this field Mr Lees-Milne moves with sure tread, detailing the

individual owners and artisans, tracing the provenance of their inspiration. Holbein, anti-clerical and Protestant, was the great moving force, and the great batch of the Reformation drove away the Italian artists who had built the Chapel of Henry VII and the screen of King's College Chapel. In their place came a host of Flemish and Germanic artists with the gross, lavish, tortuous designs that make hideous so much Tudor art. It is true, as Mr Lees-Milne points out, that some moderation of their extravagances took place under the tranquil skies of England and we are warned against despising this outbreak of Protestant insobriety. The troubled times in which we live cause us to long for the restraint of more classic forms, whether of the Italian Renaissance or the England of Inigo Jones and Wren. The time may come when we are unharried enough to relish once more the architectural monstrosities that are lavishly illustrated in this admirable Batsford book.

PAUL FOSTER, O.P.

GIOTTO FRESCOES, with an Introduction by Walter Ueberwasser. (Batsford; 25s. 6d.)

GIOTTO: PICASSO. The World's Masters—New Series, edited by Anthony Bertram. (The Studio; 3s. each.)

The latest volume in Messrs Batsford's admirable *Iris Colour Books* is devoted to seventeen large colour plates of the Giotto frescoes in the Arena Chapel, Padua (twelve plates), Santa Croce (one plate) and the Upper Church at Assisi (four plates). Giotto's genius as a master of the picture cycle demands a scale in reproduction which is scarcely practicable, but the fidelity of colour and proportion in this Batsford selection does all that can be done short of a prolonged study of the frescoes themselves. Giotto's greatness is not simply that of 'the father of modern art'; he is not a Melchisedech, without origin, a sudden invader. As Mr Anthony Bertram shows, in an excellent introduction to his selection of Giotto's paintings in the 'Studio' series, Giotto was 'not an isolated phenomenon. He was simply the greatest of those who fused Western plastic and humanistic art with the still vital Byzantine tradition.' In Giotto the suspended rapture of the Byzantines begins, as it were, to move. He is supremely the artist of the Incarnation and of its effect in giving new meaning to human nature and its needs. So it is that passion, grave and controlled though it be, enters into his conception of those that mourn over the dead Christ; and his St Francis is at one with a patterned landscape which reflects the goodness of created beauty.

It may seem a long journey from Giotto to Picasso, but Mr Bertram is equal to it, and his introduction to the modern master reveals a very welcome discrimination and absence of pomposity. His selection from