

LE REGARD D'ORPHÉE. An Inaugural Lecture. By J. B. Barrère. (Cambridge University Press; 3s. 6d.)

No one is required to take notes and pass examinations upon inaugural lectures, and the qualities that make a discourse amenable to condensation within the notebook of the University student, and to storing within his memory, are not expected in this form of oratory. They are certainly not present in the lecture with which Professor Barrère handselled the recently established Chair of French Literature at Cambridge, of which he is the first holder. For one hour he chased will-o'-the-wisps under the tolerant gaze of Orpheus, the singer's head now resting upon its shoulders, now borne upon a woman's lyre. 'Fantômes et poésie' is the subtitle of this diaphanous yet confusing *entretien*, which winds and leaps in and out of its themes like clematis on a whitethorn hedge.

'Une deuxième manière, une troisième incarnation' murmurs the professor discreetly from time to time; and once he allows himself a 'donc' ('cet anneau pontifical du discours', as Bremond called it); but on the whole the skeleton of his thought is fairly volatilized and the art with which he disguises the framework of his edifice is so consummate that one is left wondering whether the framework is there at all. 'Si l'on a suivi mon propos . . .' he says hopefully—or ironically—some five minutes before he sits down. 'If', indeed . . . the assumption is rash. It takes one deserving of a Good Driving certificate to follow all the turns and twists of the allusion-strewn course without ditching or banking. Yet the exercise is worth trying. Though the complete film is giddy, a 'still' taken at any point is rewarding and may prove the starting point of fruitful imaginings of one's own. The virtuosity of the lecturer enlivens in the long run the intellect and sensibility of the listener, and that, we feel, is what Professor Barrère has intended.

CUTHBERT GIRDLESTONE

THE HERO IN ECLIPSE IN VICTORIAN FICTION. By Mario Praz. Translated by Angus Davidson. (Oxford University Press; 45s.)

In a book of wide and lively erudition Professor Praz considers the relationship of *genre* painting to the novel, examines 'the process by which Romanticism in England gradually turned bourgeois', and analyses the work of the 'Victorian prose writers who proclaimed the dignity and beauty of humble, everyday things as against the conventional romantic idea of the heroic'.

He seeks, with the help of forty illustrations, to establish the link between the *genre* painters and Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope and George Eliot not only in their choice of subject ('everyday lyricism') but in their common anecdotal and moralizing qualities. His assertion,