

JOHN BUNYAN: THE MAN AND HIS WORKS. By Henri Talon. (Rockliff; 25s.)

It was only in the nineteenth century that *The Pilgrim's Progress* began to be considered, not as a work of piety and edification, but as a masterpiece of English prose. At one time it looked as if scholars were in danger of neglecting edification altogether in their anxiety to hail Bunyan as a pioneer of the novel of the open road. But these anticipations of profane fiction are the deductions of the literary historian; Bunyan is a conservative-minded, backward-looking writer who owes most to Puritan theology, and, beyond that, to the ancient homiletic tradition of the rural pulpit. In recent years seventeenth-century Puritan thought has received more careful examination, particularly in America (the work of Professors Perry Miller and William Haller may be mentioned).

M. Talon has attempted to digest this body of research; at the same time he does not lose sight of the creative genius in Bunyan which had impressed the nineteenth century, and which produced out of traditional material something no other 'mechanic preacher' could have produced. His approach is through the working of Bunyan's imagination; he sees the spiritual autobiography of *Grace Abounding* as providing in its obsessive imagery the germ of the allegories: in them the phenomena of Bunyan's own consciousness are projected and given objective form. M. Talon's discussion of the value of *Grace Abounding* as autobiographical evidence, and the extent to which one must presume a freer treatment of spiritual history in the light of the conventions of Puritan religious biography, is one of the most illuminating parts of his book.

In its impressive review of Bunyan's whole literary output, this study can worthily take a place along with other distinguished French contributions to English studies, like those of Legouis and Huchon. The criticism of the narrative *ordonnance* of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is excellent; so often in other hands the appreciation of Bunyan's style is limited to purple passages or character sketches. Sometimes the author relies a little too much on secondary authorities; for the English translation he has, however, corrected a number of minor historical inaccuracies which were present in the original French edition published in 1948.

ROGER SHARROCK

THE KNOT OF VIPERS. By François Mauriac, translated by Gerard Hopkins. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 11s. 6d.)

LOOK DOWN IN MERCY. By Walter Baxter (Heinemann; 10s. 6d.)

The collected edition of Mauriac's novels in English (a notable achievement in the history of translation) now includes the novel which, perhaps more than any other, deserves to be called Mauriac's