

task of writing a natural history of man in Britain. He is both a geographer and an anthropologist of distinction; as teacher and writer, his influence on the development of geographical studies in Britain during the past thirty years and more has been far-reaching and profound. Following the great tradition which begins with von Humboldt and Ritter, he has constantly upheld the theory that, in geography, to understand is as important as to describe.

Professor Fleure has conceived his present theme as a study of the changing relations between men and environment. He brings to this work the full richness of his extensive gathering in the fields of history, anthropology, geography and natural history. The first part of this abundantly illustrated volume sets forth 'something of the growth of our social tradition, in the belief that the future must build on the past'. In the second part, the author discusses the physical characteristics of the British people, their clothes and dwellings; the patterns of villages, hamlets and towns; the rôle of church and castle in the history of our society; the spread of communications and transport; and the growth of population. Dr Fleure has long been known as a scholar of distinctive viewpoints with a special gift for stimulating writing. His interpretations sometimes lead him to make generalisations with which experts are bound to disagree: for example, some of his comments on linguistic matters are not always well-founded. The design of the book has not allowed for a strict regional and chronological sequence, with the result that there is some repetition. Nevertheless, the volume is an impressive exposition of human geography by a great master.

'We are basically social beings', writes Professor Fleure, 'we have been as it were atomised or converted into waifs and strays in a crowd.' He finishes by stating a triple problem which 'our thinkers' have to face: the production and distribution of many goods 'have to be thought out on a world basis'; there must be a reshaping of social life on 'the basis of groups that are not too large'; and 'personality and initiative have to be cherished as the fountain of originality and the only means of keeping social life and thought from mechanised direction by authoritarian doctrine'. Neither the appeal to the natural history of man nor the directives of scientific humanism can provide the final solution to this problem.

I. LL. FOSTER

ITALIAN LIFE AND LANDSCAPE. Vol II: Northern Italy and Tuscany. By Bernard Wall. (Paul Elek; 18s.)

With this volume Mr Wall completes his Italian study. It would be unfair to call it a guide, for a country so rich in interest ('Life' and 'Landscape' are thus some indications of the scope of Mr Wall's book) can plainly only be glanced at even in two volumes and with more than a hundred illustrations in each.

Mr Wall's territory this time includes so much that is starred in Baedeker that the familiar catalogue might be wearisome had he not deliberately restricted his range and confined himself to those places and those works of art which are attractive to a writer whose knowledge of Italy is not simply that of a savant, still less that of a tourist, but rather of one whose intimate knowledge of contemporary Italy is fortified by a wide and yet exact scholarship.

For the visitor to Italy who wants a living picture, Mr Wall's two volumes can be warmly recommended. Not even the fullest guide book can cover Florence, Siena, Bologna, Milan, Pisa (to mention but a few of the places included in this book) but Mr Wall's discrimination is such, and his sympathy is so real, that he provides an introduction as valuable as it is delightful to read.

I.E.

RAINER MARIA RILKE: His Life and Work. By F. W. van Heerikhuizen. Translated from the Dutch by Fernand G. Renier and Anne Cliff. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 25s.)

In his last chapter but one, van Heerikhuizen quotes from a letter written by Rilke: 'Art is superfluous. Can art heal wounds, can it rob death of its bitterness? It does not calm despair, does not feed the hungry, does not clothe the freezing.' Such questioning gives the measure of Rilke's problem as a poet and indicates, too, the recognition, springing from humility, of a fundamental truth. The life and work of this cosmopolitan German pose for us the problem of the validity of the poetic experience *qua* religious. When devotion to art is so intense that life is lived almost purely in terms of artistic integrity, understood as essentially a religious pursuit, it may be wondered whether the sacrifice entailed is worthily made, for that sacrifice is not confined to the life of the artist. In the case of Rilke, for instance, the fear of limitation caused him to live apart from his wife and daughter and his progress towards love and humanity must have been a bitter thing not only for himself.

The Rilke that van Heerikhuizen so patiently builds up for us is neither 'saint' nor 'hero', but an intuitive artist, an essentially one-sided man, yet whose perceptions, whose intuitions, have extraordinary value. Van Heerikhuizen claims that his own approach to the German poet is intuitive. What he gives us is an intimate experience of Rilke, a sort of re-creation of the poet, of the stages through which he passed from the inside, as it were, in so far as his insight enables the Dutch writer to put himself in the place of the poet. Thus it is with strong sympathy that he approaches his subject, but not without a certain critical detachment. His book is concerned, not with a study of form, not with the use of language, but with the perception of being, with

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