

Tasso's work was, for Milton, the chief example in a modern tongue of the 'magnificent' style created by Italian poets of the sixteenth century: a style obtained, roughly speaking, by deliberately adding complexity and sonority to the sound and syntax of Italian verse, with a view to bringing it closer to Latin models, and especially to Virgil, than the verse of Dante and Petrarch had been. The process is brilliantly sketched by Mr Prince; who then shows how Milton continued it in English from the early sonnets to its climax in the blank verse of *Paradise Lost*, the 'magnificent' style being transformed meanwhile, and in some ways bettered, by Milton's art and the English idiom in which he worked. Some of the most interesting things that Mr Prince has to say concern the comparison of English and Italian as vehicles for poetry, and this not only in terms of Renaissance prosody. He is excellent too on the rhythm of the Italian hendecasyllabic, and very plausible, at least, about its subtle effect on the Miltonic decasyllabic—concerning which he firmly corrects Robert Bridges.

KENELM FOSTER, O.P.

ENGLAND AND THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE. By J. R. Hale. (Faber and Faber; 21s.)

Mr Hale's book presents a chronicle of English historical conceptions and English taste over a period of three centuries, as they appear in relation to Italian art and history 'between the approximate limits 1250-1550'. Since its subject is really the history of ideas, or rather of one particular idea, that of 'the Renaissance', the survey omits much that its title seems to announce—all that could be called the actual cultural relationship, so immensely important, between Italian and English writers, thinkers, artists, poets and musicians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This real and fruitful relationship, though it has not yet been exhaustively explored, has been worked and re-worked, and the decision to omit it was wise. Mr Hale has exercised a similar discretion in other directions: thus, although he gives a sparkling summary of the conception of Italy characteristic of the Gothic novel, he scarcely touches on the parallel distortion by Elizabethan dramatists, or on the hackneyed reflection of Italian culture in Romantic and Victorian poetry.

The account of the growth of interest in earlier Italian painting, more triumphantly illustrated on the walls of the National Gallery than in any other gallery in the world, reveals vividly the resistance encountered. The national collection was built up in the middle of the nineteenth century, when purchases were necessarily subject to parliamentary scrutiny, and those who had begun to appreciate Italian primitives

had to face Select Committees which put such questions as this (by Lord W. Graham): 'But if the public taste is not prepared for these pictures, might it not be possible that the public would call them trash?' Mr Hale shows what was done, not only by Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites, but also by collectors such as Eastlake and Dennistoun, and by guide-books such as Palgrave's *Murray*, to open English eyes to the greatness of Italian art from Duccio to the age of Raphael.

The notion of 'the Renaissance in Italy' emerged first in the seventeenth century, in the writings of James Howell, Historiographer Royal to Charles II, and in Sir William Temple's *Essay on the Ancient and Modern Learning* (1690). What strikes one most in the attempt to explain the phenomenon is not the obviously emotional and 'subjective' evocations of William Roscoe or John Addington Symonds, but the vacillating formulae offered. Various hollow hypotheses are bandied to and fro—the fall of Constantinople, the growth of political liberty, the beneficent sway of enlightened despots—leaving us with a strong impression of the extreme fallibility of all historical theories, and a depressing picture of how long-lived the more superficial among them may be.

F. T. PRINCE

MANZONI AND HIS TIMES. By Archibald Colquhoun. (Dent; 21s.)

Mr Colquhoun has done good service both to English readers and to Italian letters by making available, first a modern translation of the greatest of Italian novels, and now a biography of its author. Much, of course, has been written in Italian on this subject and Mr Colquhoun's intention in this book is not to add to Manzonian studies but to introduce to the English public the retiring figure of the most universal writer of modern Italy. To some the man will seem disappointing, less interesting than his novel may have led them to expect. There is certainly nothing colourful about him; nothing of the trenchancy and flamboyance of a Stendhal. He was a quiet man of the study and garden, twice married and with a number of short-lived daughters and unsatisfactory sons.

This biography is very readable and well serves its purpose. It will not, however, entirely satisfy all those who share Manzoni's religious convictions. The most important feature of the latter's life is surely its religious orientation and it is to be regretted that Mr Colquhoun does not treat this subject at the depth it deserves. It is, moreover, clear enough, notwithstanding his discretion in this respect, that the biographer shares to a certain degree a common failure to appreciate the complexity of Catholicism, tending to imagine the faithful as servile beings condemned to intellectual sterility. As Manzoni was free from