Parliamentarians. It has long been realized that the Opposition had the greater weight of previous parliamentary experience. The youth of a proportion of the Royalists may be contrasted with the age of the members of the Rump. These last included one hundred and six members who were between forty and sixty years of age at the time of the King's death. It is not without significance that Gray's Inn had forty-six representatives among the Rumpers.

There is valuable material in the relatively brief chapter on the merchants in the House of Commons, but the core of the book consists of two long chapters, the first dealing with the Eastern Association and and contributed by Mr Brunton, and the second concerned with the south-west of England. In these sections an attempt is made to give detailed samples of the composition of the Long Parliament. The tendency to trace the subsequent history of the various parliamentary families leads the authors away from the subject of their study and it is a pity that on no occasion in referring to landed property in the eastern counties is the extent or value of the estate mentioned. Further, the frequent reference to an 'old family' conveys no exact information.

The chapter dealing with the six south-western counties breaks more fresh ground and the analysis of the members for Somersetshire constituencies has points of interest. In these sections Mr Pennington gives some financial details which might very well have been expanded. The most valuable portion of the whole book is the close examination of the Dorset constituencies. An analysis of the six families that between them held the county seat and those for the boroughs of Bridport, Corfe Castle, Dorchester, Poole, Warham and Weymouth between the year of the Armada and the close of the seventeenth century is especially illuminating. Many interesting details are given, but the effort to divide the leading families into categories is not wholly convincing. The note on the Dorchester Company adventurers is useful. The fifth and sixth appendices contrive to give a mass of information as to the voting of members within a very brief compass. In general the volume is interesting but not very well planned. The references to the standing of different families in periods between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries lack precision and would have been better omitted. The book would have gained in value had it been dedicated to a really detailed examination of the members of Parliament for a single county.

DAVID MATHEW

THE ENGLISH EPIC AND ITS BACKGROUND. By E. M. W. Tillyard. (Chatto and Windus; 25s.)

Everyone is familiar with Dr Tillyard's erudition and independence of judgment, so it is no surprise to hear him voicing original and

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learned views on the nature of the epic. For some time students and amateurs have felt dissatisfied with the traditional view that roughly equated the epic with heroic poetry, for epic style has not been confined to those ages or subjects we name heroic. From time to time writers of every major language have sought in the epic a form to express the profoundest feelings of their age. Dr Tillyard sets out to identify this epic spirit: 'It was through the conviction of Dante's being as true an epic writer as Virgil that I abandoned any notion of using the heroic subject as a criterion'. Besides Homer, therefore, he examines Thucidydes, Herodotus and Xenophon; Lucius and Statius stand by Virgil; in the Middle Ages we must consider the *Song of Roland*, Dante, Langland, Malory and Lydgate. During the Renaissance we range over Italy, England, France, Portugal, and in later times full consideration must be given to *The Holy War*, *Paradise Lost*, Pope's *Iliad* and *The Decline and Fall*. If we raise our eyebrows at this ambitious sweep we shall soon lower them upon discovering the terms of Dr Tillyard's investigation. He believes that the epic needs four essential qualities. The subject must be noble and the tone lofty and the result is that kind of 'high seriousness' that comes of writing about a distinguished subject in a distinguished manner. Secondly, there must be 'amplitude'; this means the broad and steady thought that proceeds from a writer psychologically strong and balanced, a natural counterpart perhaps of the supernatural gift of wisdom which sees things from the viewpoint of God. Thirdly, a work of such size as this will be must be deliberately organized. And lastly, it must express the feelings of a large number of people living at or near the time of writing.

To the search for these qualities Dr Tillyard brings not only his vast learning but his attractive talent for expressing it fluently. One of the outstanding qualities of the book is the verve with which it is written; the reader is caught up and swept along to the end—and it is not a short book. Many things contrive to bring this about. In the first place a disarmingly simple and even colloquial style of writing which is not bait to catch a sluggish reader but simply the expression of clear thought. '[Langland] may have been very much more pious than most of his readers, but that piety of which he may have had more was *their* piety.' The idea could not be stated more clearly or briefly. Naturally such thought is accurate: 'However earnestly the most serious thought in the Middle Ages looked to God in heaven, it insisted on seeing God's imprint on earthly creatures too'. The actual criticism of texts is equally precise.

But behind everything there is that abiding quality of true scholarship which looks first for the positive truth in every object and for the error only subsequently. Thus in commenting on the wild manner in

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which medieval writers associated words, numbers and symbols he says, 'it is vain to be astonished and disgusted that the great mind of Dante could stoop to such trivialities; we should instead measure and wonder at the strength of the impulse that persuaded the great mind of Dante to obey it.' Here is another sort of 'amplitude' that proceeds from wise scholarship. Once again we must be grateful to Dr Tillyard, as we were some years ago on the publication of *Elizabethan World Picture*, for methodically applying true learning to our half-formulated ideas.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

POLITICS AND OPINION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. An Historical Introduction. By John Bowle. (Cape; 25s.)

Fundamentally political theory—the subject of this book—is concerned with the exercise of power, with political obligation: Who shall rule whom? By what authority? For what end or purpose? In his previous work, *Western Political Thought*, Mr Bowle had shown how the statement of and answers to these questions had changed with succeeding ages, and had traced a continuous evolution which by the end of the eighteenth century had arrived at the idea of a constitutional commonwealth. The tradition was established, and in fact it was already functioning in America. But the beginning of the nineteenth century introduced new and disturbing factors to the political scene. Three new problems arose. The first, which intensified the other two, was the loss of Christian belief or at least the decline of dogma. The denial of original sin—and this may be discerned, sometimes explicitly but always implicitly, in the nineteenth-century political theorists, whether Romantic, Utilitarian, Utopian or Scientific—weakens human solidarity immeasurably and engenders a fatal indifference to the abuse of power. Consequently the transition from agricultural society to industrial society meant inevitable conflict between classes and all the perils of mass society, as foreseen so well by Tocqueville, Mill and Acton. The growth of the national sovereign state, with a great industrial potential, at a time when the natural law had been rejected as a common and universal basis of value and when the myth of nation had been substituted for the myth of religion meant inevitable conflict between nations. These problems are still with us, and as the consequences of conflict may involve destruction on a global scale the solutions discussed in this book are no longer remote debates between theoreticians but matters of life and death.

Threading his way through these nineteenth-century prophets and empiricists, Mr Bowle provides an admirable introduction to the theories of nearly forty representative political thinkers set in the con-

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