

will fit traditional Christian belief, but to catch it alive we must find it in its natural element. And for that reason Miss Coburn's book will prove a most useful treasury because it preserves the treasure in its original state. Miss Coburn has done a twofold service: to us by classifying Coleridge's thoughts, and to Coleridge by keeping him alive. Even though the book looks like a catalogue with paragraphs, numbers and references, nevertheless we are conscious either as we read, or as we skip about among the gleanings, of watching a sensitive mind at work in face of truth for which she has the profoundest respect.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE ROMANTIC AGONY. By Mario Praz. (Oxford University Press; 30s.)

'Romantic agony' is an evocative phrase. It leads us, in England, to the thirty years following the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*: to Wordsworth, and his long fight, with dwindling resources, against loneliness and desolation; to Coleridge, haunted by the pains of day and the terrors of night—he called his dreams 'the foot-thick calamities of my life'; to Keats, who died with 'Hyperion' unfinished, still intent to show that 'what the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth'; to Shelley, the Minstrel Boy of the movement, who went to war with his father-in-law's 'Political Justice'—we have come to think it a blunt weapon—in his hand, and the armour of Plato girt loosely about him.

Professor Praz is talking about a lesser agony, and a lesser romanticism. He claims to study Romantic literature 'under one of its most characteristic aspects, that of erotic sensibility'. But the result is less a work of literary criticism than a treatise on sexual oddity. Swinburne gets more attention than any other Englishman. Byron is the only English writer of the first rank who receives more than passing notice—and Byron was an aristocratic republican whose literary sympathies were very largely those of an Augustan. When Professor Praz deals, as he occasionally does, with literature that matters, he relapses into vagueness: 'The magical, metaphysical meaning which Keats found in the song of the nightingale (*Ode to a Nightingale*) was applied by the aesthetes, from Gautier downwards, to female beauty, as we shall see shortly', and so on.

The Romantic movement was certainly, in one of its most important aspects, a vindication of the natural man; of the natural, and so of the sexual, man. There is good reason to think the relation between sex and creative work a close one, but it is difficult to say more about it without talking nonsense. To dismiss as nonsense this extremely close study of all sorts of animalism and satanic silliness would not be just: it were better, perhaps, to call it much ado about very little.

JOHN JONES