

Such are the matters dealt with by Pastor. Everything is graphically told and carefully documented, often from entirely new sources; and the historian continues his custom of vividly describing (almost in the form of a diary) the fluctuating fortunes of the Conclaves which preceded each election. This is always an exciting, if not always an edifying, feature of his work.

ROBERT BRACEY, O.P.

CHARTIST PORTRAITS. By G. D. H. Cole. (Macmillan; 15s.)

As Mr. Cole remarks, there is still no satisfactory history of Chartism; nor does this book pretend to be other than its title announces. Yet those who know Mr. Cole's skill in the field of social history will expect that his new work will provide much valuable matter lacking in the existing histories. And they will not be disappointed. This is particularly noticeable in the biographies where he breaks new ground, writing of Stephen, Oastler, and Harney; while he has unearthed much fascinating material in the lives of Fergus O'Connor and Bronterre O'Brien, in the latter case making use of a still unpublished Life by Dr. Alfred Plummer.

Mr. Cole has cast his net wide, both geographically and politically, ranging from the gentle Lovett to the part-mad O'Connor, from the Tories, Stephens and Oastler, to the extreme Left as represented by Cooper, who had a vogue as a poet and from being a Rationalist lecturer became a Baptist preacher. This last is typical of nearly all the personalities in the book; their lives are full of unexpected turns and should enthrall even the general reader who is not much moved by the struggle of a hungry people.

For it is true, as the writer shows, that the chief motive power of Chartism insofar as it was a popular movement was the hunger of the people. True there were many, even among its leaders, who came in to push their own particular nostrums for society, as Attwood the currency reformer, or to combat some particular abuse, as Oastler, who denounced the working of the Poor Law and of the factory system, offering, for example, to teach children how to sabotage the looms with their grandmothers' knitting needles! But these came and went, and by 1850 mass starvation had gone too, with the result that energies were transferred to the task of building up the Trades Unions.

By his method Mr. Cole brings out the extraordinarily mixed character of Chartism. It was really many movements in one, each centring round a personality, the Charter being a convenient umbrella to cover them all. Marxism arrived too late to provide any ideological background and was only taken up by Harney and Ernest Jones, the last of the Chartists and the first English Communist.

As usual, Mr. Cole tries to give a completely economic explanation of the history he records, and as usual the facts are too much for him, and in spite of himself the sheer humanity of the Chartists

blows his materialism into pieces. None the less we are duly grateful to Mr. Cole for this work of research, a 'by-activity,' he tells us, of his other work.

JOHN FITZSIMONS.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE STARLIT DOME. By G. Wilson Knight. (Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press; 16s.)

In this book Mr. Knight continues the researches into poetic symbolism which he began in his three works on Shakespeare and in *The Burning Oracle*. Here he turns to Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, and proceeds directly to the poets' symbolism, without his usual prefatory remarks on his method of interpretation. This self-effacement on the part of the author gives the book an advantage over its predecessors in that the reader no longer has to be concerned with two things, the interpretation of what the poet was trying to say, and an interpretation of that interpretation. The subject therefore stands out more clearly.

The first essay, on *The Wordsworthian Profundity*, is of very great interest as showing a range of symbol which is strongly reminiscent of some basic imagery in the Bible, though there is a notable contrast in value. The author now and again remarks on the Hebraic atmosphere, but, as we think, with some misunderstanding. The most sincere and powerful Wordsworthian symbolism is in terms of darkness, gloom, and natural and moral horrors; it is to be seen chiefly in *The Prelude* and *The Borderers*. Wordsworth found it most congenial to resolve the struggles of the world and himself into a dark and formless void, reached through moral nihilism and an acceptance of evil as an absolute, expressed in a corresponding nature-imagery of night scenes, storms, ruins, torrents;

' it is

In darkness and in tempest that we seek

The majesty of Him who rules the world' (*Borderers* II, 614).

' You can fall back on dreadful imaginings, even crime, as a source somehow, of peace: a strange, but Wordsworthian doctrine' (p. 32). Tragic experience and crime are used 'to split open the two worlds of subject and object and show the subjective self in its dark abysmal nakedness,' to 'split open the daylight world and reveal the outer darkness, the eternal otherness' (pp. 13, 32, cf. 34). It is not surprising therefore to find *The Borderers* characterised as diabolic, and it is correspondingly odd to see Wordsworth attempting a more normal scale of symbolic values in the Odes and Sonnets. He fails, as Mr. Knight recognises; the symbols of sun and light and natural peace are there, but flat and devitalised, except in that one complete success, the Immortality Ode. What is the reason for this inconsistency? If we turn to the Bible we find from first to last a con-