

faith that the claims made by Welsh scholars for Welsh literature—and especially for medieval Welsh poetry—should be accepted by Englishmen. Translations are inadequate as evidence, and in any case they scarcely exist for whole areas of Welsh writing.

The inevitable isolation of a literature such as that of Wales, too long cut off from the European tradition, has, too, discouraged serious critical standards from developing and being expressed. That is why Professor Thomas Parry's *Hanes LLenyddiaeth Gymraeg hyd 1900*, first published in 1944, is of such great importance. It is a definitive and informed survey of Welsh literature, using the resources of modern scholarship to the full. But its influence has necessarily been confined to those who can read Welsh. Now it is available in an excellent translation by Sir Idris Bell, whose pre-eminence as a scholar gives special weight to his selfless efforts in making Welsh literature better known to English readers. Already his translations of Dafydd ap Gwilym (with the assistance of his son) have revealed his sensitivity to the peculiar genius of Welsh poetry. His translation of Professor Parry's great work (brought up to the present time) gives final proof of his devoted and authoritative service to Wales and to Welsh culture.

It is impossible to indicate the scope of this history, which ranges from the earliest Welsh poetry (the heroic epics of Taliesin and Aneurin), through the great medieval achievement and the later changes—though in Welsh the tradition remains faithful to an extraordinary degree—to the writing of our own day. (And here Sir Idris Bell's appreciation of, for instance, Saunders Lewis, makes his criticism of great value in establishing the true stature of writers who would enjoy international renown if they were writing in languages more generally known.)

A principal difficulty lies in the matter of quotation, which is essential to any history of literature. Sir Idris attempts to render the peculiar intricacies of Welsh verse patterns by English equivalents. These cannot be called altogether successful, but they do at least give some idea of the special quality of the poetry he is discussing.

Altogether, then, this *History* must be considered a work of major importance, which should do much to establish the claim of Wales to possess a literature that is of international significance. It should find an essential place in any library that claims to represent literature.

ILLTUD EVANS, O.P.

AMPHIBIAN: A RECONSIDERATION OF BROWNING. By Henry Charles Duffin. (Bowes and Bowes; 30s.)

This is a work of devotional criticism; Mr Duffin knows Browning's poetry from beginning to end and admires nearly all of it. Certainly

there is room for a sympathetic book on Browning, but when I come upon 'In the reading of Browning's poetry we shall have become aware that we were in the presence of a writer who, in greatness of soul, power over character, and verbal affluence is second only to Shakespeare, and who in treatment of love is second to none', I can scarcely believe my eyes. Fantastic overvaluation of this kind can do no good to Browning's reputation, or to Mr Duffin's. It isn't merely that Mr Duffin seems unaware, judging by the way Browning rubs shoulders with Milton and Wordsworth and Keats in this book, of where he stands in contemporary estimation; he seems to have no reasonable notion as to where Browning ought to stand, granted that we are now paying less attention than his poetry deserves. And I found myself struggling through the eulogy of this book ('greatness of soul'; 'primarily a thinker'; 'charming, brilliant and inspiring'; 'the man's moral equipment was superbly complete') as through treacle in a nightmare.

The biography is better than the criticism. Mrs Miller's hostile account of Browning and his wife, published four years ago, needed an answer, and Mr Duffin goes some way towards giving one.

JOHN JONES

NOTICES

THE STORY OF WALES, by Elisabeth Inglis-Jones (Faber, 15s.). Perhaps only a novelist could embark on the enterprise of telling the history of Wales, from pre-history to 1954, in 250 pages. Miss Inglis-Jones, basing herself on such sound historians as Sir J. E. Lloyd and Professor David Williams, provides a useful popular introduction to an involved record. Inevitably full of generalizations, it is yet just in its emphasis, yet we would prefer fewer sentences like 'Many and great are the changes which the Second World War brought about in the country'. And the myth of 'warm, emotional artistry' is perpetuated. More facts and fewer fancies would greatly improve a well-intended book.

SAINTS AND OURSELVES (Second Series) is a further collection of holy biographies, edited by Philip Caraman, S.J. (Hollis and Carter, 12s. 6d.). Hagiography suffers at the moment from journalists. Although Christopher Dawson writing on St Boniface or Renée Haynes writing on St Hugh of Lincoln would by themselves justify such a book, we are inclined to feel that there should be a guillotine on 'essays on saints', at least until some more substantial work is done on the critical study of their lives and times. Repeated snippets of personal admiration are easy