

ITALY AND OTHER NATIONS

THE REMAKING OF ITALY. By PENTAD. (Penguin Books; 6d.)

This new Penguin on the Remaking of Italy will appeal to a wide and omniverous public. The central thesis is that Italy's chief enemy has always been Germany, her real friends the Anglo-Saxon peoples. The hiatus in this otherwise commendable theory is the absence of allusion to France. Perhaps Dr. Gayda's notorious contribution on this subject more than justifies the authors' omission. The first two parts are chiefly historical, and are closely concerned with substantiating the central thesis. The third part is a congenial account of the English and Italy, though more emphasis is placed on the Byron, Browning period than on the long, sustained influence and attraction that started with St. Augustine of Canterbury and rose to its peak in the sixteenth century. The last two parts on Italy under and after Fascismo are the most stimulating and provocative.

No one will disagree that the last twenty years of hyper-sensitive and hysterical nationalism have been calamitous for Italy both politically and morally. Nor is it possible to withhold admiration from those brave men who have chosen the dreariness of exile in preference to spiritual slavery in their own country. But it is equally impossible to ignore the significance of October 23rd, 1922, and its resultant consequences on the character of the Italian people themselves. The reconstruction of Italy after the war must include all Italian patriots, even those many who have swum in the swift and shallow waters of Fascist victories, at home and abroad. An attempt to approach the problem on a narrower level might well precipitate another 'Spanish War.' The authors of this book, as good Mazzinians, declare that the monarchy must perish with Fascism. But the retention of as pliant a dynasty as *casa Savoia* should embarrass no brand of post-Fascist government, while its destruction would antagonise many classes of Italians, especially the fighting services and the simple people.

JOHN VERNON.

LES ITALIENS TELS QU'ILS SONT. Par Comte Carlo Sforza. Editions de l'Arbre, Montreal; \$1.25.)

This short book of reflections about the Italian character is written not only for those who are curious about Italy, but especially for those whose first reaction on crossing the Alps was one of home-coming.

A former foreign minister and ambassador, Count Sforza draws us forward into a world where the squalor of the present seems only a forgotten stain and Italy once more holds her right place, the fountain of our European Christian heritage. Anecdote and illustration from the generous and inexhaustible store of Italian history suggest a tapestry of such dimension and richness that against it the

posturings of the past twenty years look like the shadow of some tiny diseased insect.

The first part of the book is concerned with an examination of the origins of the Italian people, and the growth of the true 'Italianità.' The second part examines the relations of Italy with her neighbours the French, Germans, Slavs, and English. Two concluding chapters deal with Fascism and the place of Italy in the New Europe. There is a useful appendix of books on Italian problems, to which Megaro's *Mussolini in the Making* might possibly have been added.

JOHN VERNON.

DANTE AND THE PRESENT WAR. By Lucy Redpath.

RELIGION AND LOVE IN DANTE. By Charles Williams. (Dacre Papers, Nos. 5 and 6; Dacre Press; 6d. each.)

Of these two pamphlets, that by Mr. Williams is certainly the better written and the more intrinsically valuable. It is also the harder one to review. One cannot overlook Miss Redpath's energy and enthusiasm; and, for all the flaws in her style and her attitude (as I understand it), one must admit with gratitude that she does send one back to the text of the 'Comedy.' But Mr. Williams reaches a deeper level and is correspondingly, tantalisingly, more elusive.

Miss Redpath has written a Tract for the Times, with 'The Comedy' for a text-book. She is concerned to point out likenesses between Dante's experience and our own, to find a common level, to ignore difficulties. And no doubt there is a likeness. All purgatorial sufferings are more or less similar, all sin is horrible and can suitably be pictured horribly. So the present war can, in a sense, appropriate the Dantesque representation of Purgatory and Inferno. But I find two objections to Miss Redpath's method. The first, and in this context the less important, is that her judgment of moral facts is naive and even rather crude. For example, it follows from what she says on p. 14 that she is sure that Dante would have put Franco in Hell along with Pope Celestine. Perhaps he would; but by what right does Miss Redpath see in all neutral rulers to-day the type of those whom Dante damned for making 'il gran rifiuto'? For, whatever Dante's allocation of Franco or de Valera might have been there is no doubt about Miss Redpath's. One would not mind her thinking simply that we were right and the Axis wrong. But the praise and blame she deals out are personal; and in clear blacks and whites according to the side taken by this or that person. The difference between action and motive, *finis operis* and *finis operantis* is thus obscured.

Again, she glorifies Dante at the expense of common-sense. Because he was a genius he was incapable of common faults. She actually says (am I right in supposing this typical of a certain class,