

## REVIEWS

on the realities of life within and without society. Consequently, to understand the cause of war, a knowledge of the Capitalist System is essential: war within society—man with man, group with group, Capital with Labour—leading to expansion and war without. Hutt's *Conditions of the Working Class in Britain* should be well studied.

But there is another vital factor: the utter lack of respect of man for man: the lack of a dynamic "togetherness." Is it surprising that men do not respect one another as members of the Mystical Body when they treat each other like automatons in the natural order?

P. W. SINGLETON.

THE TWO NATIONS. By Christopher Hollis. (Routledge; 10/6.)

Mr. Hollis has followed up his *Breakdown of Money* with a full dress study of the history of England, from the financial angle. As such his book will be essential as a commentary and supplement to the general run of historical textbooks. Not only does it contain a great deal of information which is by no means easily at the disposal of the ordinary reader, but it should do much to lessen the gap which undoubtedly exists between the point of view of the historian of the present day and that of the general public. The latter is often scarcely beyond the stage of J. R. Green's *Short History of the English People* as yet. Despite his uncompromising views, it must be realized that Mr. Hollis is by no means a solitary faddist in his attempt to emphasize the enormous effect of the financial element on past history. To take a solitary instance, to-day it is generally recognized that one of the reasons for the decision to end the Crimean War was the fact that, though the Russian government had continued during the war to pay to the British bondholders their interest, the exhaustion of the country made it improbable that this payment would continue if the war was prolonged in order to gain more favourable political terms. It is an accepted fact which "every school-boy"—as Macaulay would have said—is expected to learn. The same is true of the rise of prices and its effect on seventeenth century England. Mr. Hollis's purpose is to supply such facts right down the line of modern English history. His chapters on the financial problem which faced the Stuart Kings and on Ireland are particularly valuable.

There are, naturally, incidental judgments from which many informed readers will dissent. It is not true to say, for instance, that the Poor Law of 1834 succeeded in its object: it was the boom in railway construction and, therefore, in the allied industries which in reality provided the solution, for the time being. Many of Mr. Hollis's readers will be inclined to think that he has fallen too completely a victim to the indisputable attraction of

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Disraeli. It is certain that "that distinguished foreigner" would enjoy reading Chapter xiv.

Finally, if anyone should still suppose that economic history is dull, let him borrow this book: it is a safe prophecy that he will want a copy as a permanent addition to his library.

T. CHARLES EDWARDS.

## LITERATURE

DANTE LE THEOLOGIEEN. By P. Mandonnet, O.P. (Desclée de Brouwer; 15 frs.)

THE FABER BOOK OF MODERN VERSE. Edited by Michael Roberts. (Faber & Faber; 7/6.)

Leaving his own special field of study in which he had produced a lifetime's measure of first-rate work, P. Mandonnet would seem to have written the present book in a mood for relaxation; the result is not first-rate, but though interesting and incidentally very instructive, as a whole superficial and weak. The pivot of the book is the following novel thesis: that Dante was a cleric; that he advanced shakily to the stage of minor orders, and then lost his vocation through becoming absorbed first by poetry, then by philosophy. But that he repented: at first only momentarily, at the time of his writing the *Vita Nuova*, when he vowed to make reparation by writing something further that should be truly worthy praise of the grace of God which he had abused; but then, after his defection into philosophy recorded in the *Convivio*, that he came to himself completely, passed through the purgatory of his exile, and eventually wrote the *Commedia* in fulfilment of his *Vita Nuova* resolution, thus moreover taking up again in effect the clerical office from which he had disgracefully retreated.

This particular theory is linked up with a general purely allegoric characterization of Beatrice and of the "screen" ladies of the *Vita Nuova*. Nothing new in that; but it requires far better arguments nowadays than the author provides to maintain that from the first Beatrice was a purely allegoric creation, that she never played a flesh and blood part in the life of Dante. It seems to be taken as a matter of course that at the time of writing the *Vita Nuova* Dante should enjoy the same "degree of abstraction" from the physical as at the time of writing the *Commedia*.

But the weakest part of the book—which would need to be the strongest—is that which tries to prove by particular exegesis the theory of *Dante clericus*: that Beatrice does not simply represent divine grace or the supernatural order—which she certainly does in the *Commedia*, and probably also in the *Vita Nuova* though more circuitously: it is the assumption of *pure* allegory that we resent—but that the vicissitudes of Dante's relations with her