

is severely technical. This is, indeed, as it should be: but one could wish that some final synthesis of the theological and the economic had been attempted—the ‘general conclusions’ read suspiciously like a mere list of points made by individual speakers which is concerned with offending no one by omission rather than its own internal consistency. The major weakness in this impressive survey is undoubtedly its failure to consider the significance of the distribution of property rather than of income as the fundamental malaise of the modern economy. Fr Sommet alone discusses property at any length, and with admirable lucidity, but in such general terms as to reach few practical conclusions. M. Piettre’s technical competence commands such respect that one regrets the more keenly that on several occasions he looks the problem squarely in the eye, and then, like the famous divine, passes it by. The most significant fact in the book is that thrown out almost absent-mindedly by M. Closon—that in 1949 ‘mixed incomes’ (i.e. those arising from a combination of work and property ownership) amounted to some 43 per cent of total French incomes. This suggests a very much wider distribution of property than in Britain, which should surely qualify the approving glances directed by several speakers to British income-redistribution. But there is no discussion whatever of this tremendously important point.

The book remains, however, a magnificent stimulant for anyone concerned (and who is not?) with the problem of the reconstruction of the social order. Space permits merely an *aperitif* or two: M. Piettre’s remark that France has passed from the stage of ‘atomic’ capitalism to ‘molecular’ capitalism, and, in Canon Mouroux’s eloquent and moving address, the statement of man: ‘Quand son corps a faim, son bien, c’est le pain; quand son coeur a faim, son bien, c’est la vérité; quand son esprit a faim, son bien, c’est Dieu même’. Innumerable such discoveries await those who, equipped with a little French, care to try their hand at prospecting in the fascinating territory which this book comprises.

EDWARD NEVIN

LORD BYRON: *Christian Virtues*. By G. Wilson Knight. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 30s.)

Nobody of this generation has written so well about Shakespeare as Mr Wilson Knight. He is one of those few in the history of criticism who make plain in their writing the difference, one of kind, not of degree, between living thought and the manipulation of received ideas. His work has suffered the common fate of extreme originality, which is to be both pilloried and plagiarised, sometimes by the same persons; and it is still too early to be certain how much of the contemporary attitude to Shakespeare and dramatic poetry is of his making.

The present study of Byron is disappointing in its uncontrolled

ambitions. Mr Knight gives us his view, on the first page of the first chapter, that Byron 'is our greatest poet in the widest sense of the term since Shakespeare', but Byron's literary importance is not his main concern. The theme is that of universal genius, of Byron the Nietzschean superman who 'lived out in his own person the guilt of European history': one is invited to think of him as 'the next Promethean man in Western history after Christ'. Conclusions as momentous as these must be worked for, and it needs to be said that Mr Knight spares himself no labour. His study of Byronic sources is astonishingly detailed and careful: this is not in any ordinary sense a crackpot theory. The overriding objection may be put in this way. No discrediting of journalistic biography, no demonstration of the need for serious reassessment of Byron, no consciousness that Mr Knight has Europe on his side on many important issues, and only England against him, can of itself, or by any cumulative force, establish the counter-thesis.

That great and pioneer book, *The Wheel of Fire*, introduced us to the idea of poetic action, of paradox final to waking life resolved within an inclusive perfection of dramatic structure. But art is what it is; and when we are asked to see in Byron's life, as a matter of fact and not merely of dramatic potentiality, the movement beyond what we usually regard as mortal limits, in particular beyond the opposition of good and evil, we are surely bound to require something of greater intellectual substance than any marriage of Christian morals to Nietzschean philosophy can accomplish.

JOHN JONES

MARY TUDOR. By H. F. M. Prescott. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 30s.)

Some twelve years ago Miss Prescott's *Spanish Tudor* was considered by a distinguished historian to be 'far and away the best of the biographies of Mary . . . a notable book'. He was not alone in this opinion for, quite apart from achieving a wide acclaim, it was awarded the James Tait Black Historical Prize. During the war years the book was forced out of print and has now been re-issued under its present title, revised in the light of recent discoveries, and entirely re-illustrated. It is more than ever a notable book, a thoroughly satisfying study of, in Professor Pollard's phrase, 'the most honest of Tudor rulers'.

This book is the better for being written by a woman, who with delicate understanding, and sustained by a remarkable scholarship, succeeds in presenting Mary very much as she must have appeared to her contemporaries. There is no stress on the terrible nickname; there is instead a careful analysis of its origin, which results in a certain extenuation. Anyone of a normal sensibility, approaching the subject of Mary Tudor with an open mind, must feel sympathy for a lonely and at the same time