Italian Literature to the Renaissance

can the classical revival be understood apart from its philosophical interests and tendencies? Here again useful investigations have been made, particularly on the contact of philosophy with literary studies.¹

HUMANISM AND THE RENAISSANCE

By P. Rébora

An outstanding feature of the progress of Italian Studies in recent years is the ever-increasing output of critical editions and of important reprints of classical authors. Some well-known collections, like the Scrittori d'Italia of Bari and the Collezione dei classici italiani of Turin, have steadily increased their publications.

Among the several important editions published in the last few years, mention should be made at least of the Orlando Furioso (ed. by S. De Benedetti), Sannazzaro's Arcadia (ed. by E. Carrara), the Works of Machiavelli (ed. by G. Mazzoni and M. Casella), the History of Italy of Guicciardini (ed. by G. Panigada), and the Italian version of Campanella's De sensu rerum (ed. by A. Bruers).²

Critical works on Humanism and the Renaissance reflect the general tendency of modern Italian criticism, which remains on one side frankly aesthetic in its attitude, on the lines of the still predominant De Sanctis-Croce tradition, and on the other is more and more inclined to attempt synthetic surveys of periods and movements, by means of searching and stimulating interpretations of spiritual motives and moral impulses with a view to formulating general conclusions, after the preparatory work of laborious and minute scholarship in points of detail, carried out in past years on the strictest lines of the historical method.


Thus we have Toffanin’s works, in which we see a modern and original mind discussing the essentials of literary currents, and attempting to unravel the entangled threads of such movements as Humanism, the Counter-Reformation, and Arcadia. In his more recent book, Toffanin sums up his conclusions on the fundamental character of Humanism, which he describes as a reaction and a bulwark against an heterodox and romantic rebellion which was already at work in the communal age and which finally burst forth at the Reformation; a conscious acceptance of limitations, order, control, hierarchy; antiphilosophical par excellence but nevertheless a philosophy itself, when it is consciously and systematically thought and expressed.

The aesthetic school seems to have found a particular field of speculation lately in the interpretation of Ariosto’s poetry. Following upon Croce’s brilliant essay, A. Momigliano, G. Raniolo, and others have given us illuminating books on the essence of Ariosto’s art; somewhat widening, however, Croce’s definition of Ariosto’s motive as supreme love of harmony. In his analysis of the nobility of Ariosto’s poetic dreams, Momigliano brings out elements of high moral seriousness as the chief constituents of Ariosto’s poetry. Raniolo strikes an even more human and comprehensive note in his emphasis on Ariosto’s sorrow and melancholy, tempered, however, as it is by the charitable smile of humour and irony. Further light on Ariosto will probably be shed by a new biography, based on much unpublished material, which will appear shortly, the work of M. Catalano. The study of Ariosto has lately taken a popular turn, in the form of various celebrations and attractive publications for the general public. The French scholar Professor Hauvette has published a lucid book on the poet and on chivalrous poetry at Ferrara.¹

Several essays, on Poliziano (by A. Momigliano), on Lorenzo de’ Medici (by E. Rho),² and on Renaissance lyricists in general (by

² Rho, E., Lorenzo il Magnifico, Bari, Laterza, 1926.