

TERESA OF AVILA. By Kate O'Brien. (Max Parrish; 7s. 6d.)

This short sketch of St Teresa is a novelist's experiment in biography and character study. While it can hardly be said to have succeeded, as, Miss O'Brien herself admits on page 92, nevertheless it was worth carrying out. The experiment may be described as the attempt to examine personality in dissociation from character, and, in the particular example before us, to see whether the captivating personality of the woman we know as Santa Teresa de Jesús might not (for some future novel, as it were) serve to contain a quite different character. But distinct as we feel character and personality to be, the one laboriously built up by environment, education and, above all, the action of the individual will, the acceptance and following of chosen ideals of conduct and destiny, while personality is an endowment of fate in the same category as pigmentation, nevertheless, the two are almost indistinguishably interwoven, and it proves impossible to render Teresa's personality without reference to the sanctity to which she raised her character. This does not imply that the initiative to sanctity arises out of personality, but it does imply that we know the personality only in the light of the character that grows out of it, and not as a prior indeterminate which would have been the same had the character not been trained towards sanctity but (taking the example Miss O'Brien proposes on page 76), towards literature (an unlikely contingency—what would Doña Teresa de Cepeda have written about?). In other words, while we may admit, with due caution, a certain dependence of the development of character upon personality, we must also concede a considerable transformation of personality under the impact of growing character. It is this last, perhaps, which makes hagiography such an unreadable department of literature, and more concentration on the personality of the saints in isolation, as far as this is possible (which is not so far as Miss O'Brien tries to go in this little book) might do something to improve it. Mr Waugh and Mr Graham Greene have both done something in this direction lately. If Miss O'Brien could find it in her to be as pre-occupied with sanctity as are these distinguished novelists, she might yet give us the real book on sixteenth-century Spain that she is capable of writing.

EDWARD SARMENTO

A NATURAL HISTORY OF MAN IN BRITAIN. By H. J. Fleure, F.R.S. (Collins; 21s.)

The editors of the *New Naturalist* series have set out to produce a synthesis of British ecology, and they rightly believe that a study of 'man himself in his relationship, through the ages, with the varied natural environment afforded by the British Isles' is 'an essential and vital element' in this project. Professor Fleure has taken on the difficult

task of writing a natural history of man in Britain. He is both a geographer and an anthropologist of distinction; as teacher and writer, his influence on the development of geographical studies in Britain during the past thirty years and more has been far-reaching and profound. Following the great tradition which begins with von Humboldt and Ritter, he has constantly upheld the theory that, in geography, to understand is as important as to describe.

Professor Fleure has conceived his present theme as a study of the changing relations between men and environment. He brings to this work the full richness of his extensive gathering in the fields of history, anthropology, geography and natural history. The first part of this abundantly illustrated volume sets forth 'something of the growth of our social tradition, in the belief that the future must build on the past'. In the second part, the author discusses the physical characteristics of the British people, their clothes and dwellings; the patterns of villages, hamlets and towns; the rôle of church and castle in the history of our society; the spread of communications and transport; and the growth of population. Dr Fleure has long been known as a scholar of distinctive viewpoints with a special gift for stimulating writing. His interpretations sometimes lead him to make generalisations with which experts are bound to disagree: for example, some of his comments on linguistic matters are not always well-founded. The design of the book has not allowed for a strict regional and chronological sequence, with the result that there is some repetition. Nevertheless, the volume is an impressive exposition of human geography by a great master.

'We are basically social beings', writes Professor Fleure, 'we have been as it were atomised or converted into waifs and strays in a crowd.' He finishes by stating a triple problem which 'our thinkers' have to face: the production and distribution of many goods 'have to be thought out on a world basis'; there must be a reshaping of social life on 'the basis of groups that are not too large'; and 'personality and initiative have to be cherished as the fountain of originality and the only means of keeping social life and thought from mechanised direction by authoritarian doctrine'. Neither the appeal to the natural history of man nor the directives of scientific humanism can provide the final solution to this problem.

I. LL. FOSTER

**ITALIAN LIFE AND LANDSCAPE. Vol II: Northern Italy and Tuscany.** By Bernard Wall. (Paul Elek; 18s.)

With this volume Mr Wall completes his Italian study. It would be unfair to call it a guide, for a country so rich in interest ('Life' and 'Landscape' are thus some indications of the scope of Mr Wall's book) can plainly only be glanced at even in two volumes and with more than a hundred illustrations in each.