

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