

to harmonious union of all elements in *Weir of Hermiston*, an embryo tragedy, fragmentary, but a perfect work of art. This is done by means of first class criticism. 'psychological' and 'documentary' well co-ordinated. It would perhaps be ungenerous to ask for a closer investigation of the parallel with Charles Lamb's childhood worship, but there is one tantalising loose end. Stevenson's love of the open air seems oddly English—almost pipe and brogues—and that doesn't seem to fit in. Perhaps a Scotsman could explain that as successfully as he put Stevenson right in the Scottish tradition of Henryson interiors and Dunbar's Edinburgh. This is quite excellent and Englishmen must be grateful. Finally the brief chapter on the poems and essays throws considerable light on the earlier part of the book and repays careful reading.

G. A. MEATH, O.P.

MEREDITH. By Siegfried Sassoon. (Constable; 15s.)

No doubt there are many who will be induced to read this biography because of recollections of previous diversions from the pen of Siegfried Sassoon. For who could forget the thrill of reading the 'Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man' and its sequels? The Sassoon-enthusiast who may have read little of Meredith's works, or who is perhaps aware of him only as a novelist whom one really must read some day, need have no qualms. What Mr Sassoon did for fox-hunting, he does equally effectively for Meredith. Mr Sassoon writes of the creator of *Evan Harrington* and *Diana of the Crossways* with the discriminating enthusiasm of one who has been a 'Meredithian' since his youth. He writes, too, of his subject with a sensitive understanding of the nostalgic quality in Meredith who 'can make us remember what it felt like to be young, can recover for us the rapture and dizzying uncertainty of first love, can make us breathe the air of early morning, and bring back the forgotten strangeness of mountains looked at long ago'.

The course of Meredith's life and literary development is traced with sympathetic care. And, as one would expect from a 'Meredithian' with such a reputation as a clever craftsman in the art of writing, Mr Sassoon gives critical studies and appreciations of Meredith's novels and more important poetry. 'The star of Meredith'. Mr Sassoon asserts confidently, 'burns and is alive with constant fire'. In this study of the great Victorian novelist, Mr Sassoon has achieved his purpose in revealing that 'star's' brilliance to a public from which it has long been obscured.

KIERAN MULVEY, O.P.

HUMAN ECOLOGY. By Thomas Robertson. (MacLellan; 21s.)

The aim of this book, in the author's words, is 'to make a scientific approach to social phenomena and is a plea for a better and more extensive application of the scientific method'. The particular scientific method to which he refers is adapted from that branch of biology known as 'ecology, mutual adjustment between organism and environment.

The author is a convinced social creditor, but his thesis is presented with a great deal more pretentiousness, pomp and circumstance and false assumption than the writings of Douglas, Soddy and the rest. For example, after describing conditions in Nazi Germany, Dr Robertson continues that 'with the exception of an avowed and open secret police there is nothing in this dismal category which does not apply to Britain'. The reason given for this obviously absurd assumption is that 'since all nations are subject to the same play of financial forces, all must show the identical pattern of behaviour'. One feels that the author has departed from the scientific method early in his work. If he believes that he will believe anything.

The section on money is the usual rehash of material on usury, debt and taxation, and from there the author moves on to a section curiously entitled 'The Mental Mechanism and our servitude thereto'. Early in this section we are told that of all the great faiths that of Christianity has been the most perverted, for which reason the source and centre of the world disorders is to be found in nominally Christian countries'.

There are many interesting and provocative sections in this book, but they are smothered and vitiated by a restricted mode of thinking, represented by the quotations we have already given. The publisher's claim that this is a major social document of vital importance to all concerned with the building of a new society is surely not borne out by reference to the minimal section on religion where it is dismissed in the following terms: 'the "objective" of the mechanism of religion is to foster "unreality" and to inculcate submission to external authority'.

JOHN FITZSIMONS

GO EAST, OLD MAN. By Vernon Bartlett. (Latimer House; 9s. 6d.)

Discoursing at large on the East is a dangerous habit unless your audience consists of cronies who can interrupt you with their own tit-bits of experience. You are apt to meet that glassy look that denotes boredom. The trouble is that for the stay-at-home there are altogether too much strangeness and diversity in eastern life. They give him indigestion.

Mr Vernon Bartlett is too experienced a raconteur to fall into this trap (though even he comes near it sometimes when the reader is led from rich lunch to richer dinner through a welter of unimaginable scenery and architecture). He has a light touch and knows how to vary his narrative with good stories and ridiculous situations, to say nothing of his sorties into politics and social problems.

The book is written in diary form, which has advantages. It makes possible sudden stops and new beginnings, and more ground is covered to the page. It is moreover the diary of a convalescent, and convalescents have a way of mingling irritation with golden enjoyment. The reader is likely to pass through similar moods.

R. D. JEBB