

His vision is often tantalisingly obscure, almost always provocative, sometimes provoking. One would like to have the author at one's elbow: here to elucidate his meaning, there to fill the gaps which too often render his thought seemingly inconsequential, now to defend or argue his contentions, now again to thank him for many luminous observations. However difficult it may be, sometimes, to agree with him, at other times even to understand him, we cannot fail to recognise that his is an honest and powerful mind, and that the consideration of the interrelation of revelation, reason and archetypal images is an urgent task. If he offers us more stimulus for thought than clear-cut conclusions, his book is none the less valuable for that, and the vastness of his theme could hardly otherwise be made to fit the narrow confines required by the Bampton Bequest.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

NIETZSCHE: THE STORY OF A HUMAN PHILOSOPHER. By H. A. Reyburn. (Macmillan; 1948; 21s.)

The study of Nietzsche, at least at second-hand, has a certain vogue nowadays, as is not surprising in view of the influence he has had on the contemporary world. There is also something tantalising about so powerful a sweep of thought issuing from a very individual background and in close dependence upon it. We feel ourselves confronted with the enigmas of prophecy rather than the clarities of science. Professor Reyburn therefore does good service by telling the tale of the individual background in some detail. At a time when Kierkegaard was still forgotten Nietzsche vigorously proclaimed the existentialist message that 'immaculate' objective thought is a treachery and a chimera. Thought must spring from life, from personal existence, and be conditioned by it throughout. Nietzsche's own utterances were the reflection of his successive momentary conditions of life and he refused to be ashamed of contradictions when those ensued. So his history is more than usually important for the understanding of his thought, and the mainly historical method of this book is therefore most helpful. It is perennially surprising that the classical beginnings of Nietzsche's education and his training as a philologist should have issued in the wild romanticism of his writings on Greek culture. He moves in a world that might be described as 'beyond the *Bacchae*', Germanic rather than Greek. The profound influence of Schopenhauer on that re-fashioning of classicism is well stressed, but classical objectivity and system is the last thing to be expected of Nietzsche in any sphere unless it be discovered to have overtaken him in spite of himself. Wilamowitz's exclamation at his classical excursions: 'What a nest of imbecility', is repeatedly apposite, but misses the point that there lies in the whole story a case-history rich in interest for the psychologist. Into that field Professor Reyburn does not enter far, but he provides plenty of material for others to work on. The appositeness of the word 'human' in the sub-title

may be questioned; it is a just qualification of the story as he has told it.

Ivo THOMAS, O.P.

APE AND ESSENCE. A Novel by Aldous Huxley. (Chatto & Windus; 7s.6d.)

This book is described by the publishers as a cautionary tale: a picture of the post-atomic-war age. But the caution is robbed of its power, partly because the picture itself is unconvincing, repellent without being plausible, indignant but not coherent; partly because the survivor and representative of the old order is hardly more dignified or attractive than the grave-looting, devil-worshipping, sex-obsessed new-agers. And this is a deeper reason than the technical failure of the book for wishing that it had never been published. The positive side of what Mr Huxley has had to say in his recent works is so vitally important that it is a tragedy when he ruins his case by revealing in ever deeper colours his *horror humani*, his disgust for humanity. If he could see and love the greatness that so often lurks beneath the squalors of humanity, and so could pity the squalors, he could help humanity out of the morass; as it is, those who look to him for guidance in the search for sanity may well be excused if at this point they say to themselves, If this is the attitude to mankind which this search for God instils in us we are better advised to stop—or at least to wait until Mr Huxley for his part has begun to search for man.

GERALD VANN, O.P.

MEN AND WIVES. By I. Compton-Burnett.

MORE WOMEN THAN MEN. By I. Compton-Burnett. (Eyre & Spottiswoode; 7s.6d. each.)

The novels of Miss Compton-Burnett are appearing in a uniform edition, which should make it possible for readers unfamiliar with her work to estimate its importance as a whole. No contemporary writer of fiction has received praise so generous. 'The purest and most original of contemporary English artists', says Miss Rosamund Lehmann; 'one of the most original living writers', says Mr Edwin Muir. And yet she is scarcely known beyond the narrowly circumscribed world of the critics.

The first clue to her novels lies in their titles: *Brothers and Sisters*, *A House and its Head*, *A Family and a Fortune*. and those under review. She writes of family life, of the elaborate life of natural loyalties against a social background that is, one supposes (no dates intrude) Edwardian. The stuff of her fiction is at first sight trivial: in *Men and Wives* the complications in a village centring round its two principal families, in *More Women than Men* the conflicts springing from the life of a staff in a girls' school—but conflicts that relate to husbands, wives, brothers, sisters. Indeed what happens in her novels matters very little, though sheer melodrama—a murder or a suicide—can enter as coolly as you will. The