

Great strain on the relations between chiefs and their people is also caused by the operation of the agricultural, veterinary and health regulations. It should be remembered that very often these have only been stringently applied since 1945 and there is a great deal of evidence from all over British Africa to show that they, more than any other single factor, have been responsible for uniting the peasants on whom they bear within the new African political parties.

Such problems inherent to the policy of indirect rule will have to be faced by the forthcoming independent governments and therefore the documentation provided by this book makes it relevant reading for anyone interested in the future as well as the past of Africa.

W. J. ARGYLE

THE VICTORIANS. By Sir Charles Petric. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 30s.)

The bigger the subject, the more books may (if they are good ones) be written on it. Once the history of the jute industry in early Hanoverian Dundee has been 'done', it need never be done again. But 'the Victorians', or even just 'the social transformation' over which they and the Edwardians presided—for how many books of the impressionistic and anthological kinds on such limitless themes is there not room? G. M. Young's is of course the nonpareil, but there are many others and will be many more. It is in fact impossible for anyone of keen and interesting mind not to bring up something new, or throw new lights on old facts. But, alas! Sir Charles Petric has not managed to do so. He has little new to say; his anecdotes are most of them old chestnuts; and the principles that underlie his selection of material are, to say the least, obscure. Even the illustrations are poor. Who is to read this harmless, aimless book? It's no good for students. Even as an 'appetizer' it won't do, for it is far too dull. Presumably Sir Charles's books find those readers among the retired and the leisured in whose hearts sound chords readily responsive to his simple interest in such things as royalty, aristocracy, society gossip, *bons mots*, startling contrasts, sport, virtue, and amateurism. If they don't know as much about nineteenth-century society as may be learnt from a good sixth-form text book, then this book may teach them something; but they'll need plenty of enthusiasm for its author and his approach to carry them through it.

G. F. A. BEST

IN DEFENSE OF REASON. By Yvor Winters. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 42s.)

If the first credential we demand of a critic, before we listen to his rationale, is that he should tell us what particular writers he thinks are good writers, Professor Winters has never been backward in presenting it: Elizabeth Daryush, for example, 'the finest British poet since T. Sturge Moore'; Adelaide Crapsey, 'who is certainly an immortal poet, and who has long been one of the most famous poets of our century'; and of course his wife, Janet Lewis, 'one of the best poets of her generation, as well as one of the best fictionists'.

This might portend something new and exciting in the appraisal of modern literature, but seasoned readers of American criticism will know better (the book is largely a redaction of the author's major essays, making many of them accessible in England for the first time). The central thesis, a rationalization of intransigence, bears out what wiseacres and dilettantes have always felt—that the influential poets of the 'twenties made a botch of the revolution in poetry. Ezra Pound, for example, 'is merely a barbarian on the loose in a museum': the automatic charges of barbarism, decadence and wilful 'obscurity are all here, detailed and applied to show how some Americans, hopelessly corrupted by the Romantic view of life which they often detested, ended by wrecking English poetry.

Much of what Winters says could be allowed to stand. His exposure of the antinomies in T. S. Eliot's criticism is now almost a routine, and his account of Wallace Stevens looks temptingly like the truth. And if the defence is almost entirely an attack—and a fairly conventional kind of attack at that—it is, honourably enough, in the service of an intent solicitude for reason and civilization. A post-Christian with a *penchant* for Aquinas, Winters adduces Gilson and Valéry to illustrate the intelligence of our time at its finest and most coherent. It may be that they do. But so far as poetry goes, the claims we have quoted for the fugitive talents of these ladies are too extravagant for one to believe that Winters is at all sensitive to the real poetic needs, and achievements, of our time.

F. K.

PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN: His Life and Spirit. By Nicolas Corte, translated, and with an introduction, by Martin Jarrett-Kerr, C.R. (Barric and Rockliff; 15s.)

After the success of *The Phenomenon of Man* it is only to be expected that, in addition to translations of other works of Teilhard, there will be quite a spate of books about him and his thought. The publishers of this one are to be congratulated at least for being the first in the field. Appropriately enough, if we are in for a feast of Teilhardiana, M. Corte's contribution will serve as an *apéritif*—more exactly a cocktail. He himself says that 'a short book must necessarily move within relatively narrow limits'. But he contrives to give us, in the space of 115 pages, a biography of Teilhard, an exposition of *Le Phénomène Humain*, a survey of some of the destructive criticisms that had appeared prior to 1957 (notably the article by Fr Bosio, S.J., published in *La Civiltà Cattolica*), an account of the view of some of his more sympathetic critics and, finally, a chapter on the closing years of his subject's life. M. Corte is himself essentially *sympathique*. Curiously, the one feature of the system of thought that he cannot accept is the evolution of the Biosphere from the inorganic Barysphere: like a good old-fashioned vitalist, he feels the need for an infusion of *vita* to account for the animation of the 'dead' world of matter. There are those, of course, who would be content with a similar sort of process between Biosphere and Noosphere. The theory of the soul as ghost in the machine has an almost hypnotic appeal for