

EIGHT DECISIVE BOOKS OF ANTIQUITY. By F. R. Hoare. (Sheed and Ward; 16s.)

Too often history is thought of in terms of dates, periods and personalities; whereas the real facts that should be the historian's concern are what Maitland called the 'common thoughts' that make these dates and period and personalities intelligible. Ultimately the course of history is ruled by mind. At times, indeed, we contact that mind only after long, detailed and often wearisome studies of the minutiae of a period; but at other times we are fortunate in having that mind presented to us in a form which is the crystallisation of the common thoughts. It is with eight such crystallising influences that Mr Hoare's *Eight Decisive Books of Antiquity* deals; for he felt that the fact is inescapable that a very high proportion of the ideas that have shaped or at least turned the course of history either were given to the world in the first instance in a book, or became the fixed form of a civilisation or of a political system as a result of being embodied in a book. On this basis he selects and analyses *The Laws of Hammurabi* (which 'gave legal form and sanction to the first bourgeois state'); *The Book of the Dead* ('catering for that preoccupation with another world that was largely responsible for the static character of Egyptian civilisation'); *The Torah* ('the charter of the Chosen People'); the *Epics of Homer* ('that preserved the unity of the disunited Hellenes'); *The Laws of Manu* ('which fixed the caste system that still characterises Hindu India'); *The Sayings of Confucius* ('they formed the minds . . . of the bureaucracy of the literati which for centuries ruled China'); Plato's *Republic* and the *Politics* of Aristotle. Few can quarrel with his choice; and our only regret on putting down this book is that the author did not live to write the second and third series of *Decisive Books* which he had planned to cover the period from Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* to Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. The incisive analyses of the *Defensor Pacis*, the *Il Principe* or Calvin's *Institutes*, which reasonably we might have looked forward to after reading this present book, would have been value at any price.

LEONARD BOYLE, O.P.

THE MAKING OF FRANCE. By Marie-Madeleine Martin. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 21s.)

NAPOLÉON BONAPARTE: His Rise and Fall. By J. M. Thompson. (Blackwell; 35s.)

It is easy for an insular reviewer to underestimate the difficulties which attended the unification of France. The island imposes its frontiers; the continent tantalises with wide possibilities. The size of England, so much more compact than that of France, has been an enormous help in establishing central institutions without losing touch with regional idiosyncrasies. Mlle Martin's book deals historically with