

that it does; if he had grouped the miscellaneous information around these key-points; then he would have written a book that would have done more than the most abstruse discussion of the relative sincerity of Yeats's ideas to prove that Yeats the poet must have had a powerful mind as well as a sensitive, must have been more than a daft old man with some crazy notions, and a snob to boot.

As it is, Mr. MacNeice makes his points ineffectively because more or less at hazard: he has some pretty bricks but his house crumbles for want of concrete foundation. In writing of Yeats's prose he remarks that the connection between poetry and prose is intimate, a suggestion which offers an approach to the differences between the early and the late manner, but then makes no attempt at demonstration; and with the discipline of a little analysis I doubt if Mr. MacNeice could find evidence to endorse his vague appeal, with reference to the last poems, to the prophetic note of Blake. Everywhere there is confusion over particularities. Mr. MacNeice can make some very sensible general remarks about Housman ('the English Romantic masochistically practising heroics in the last ditch') and can appear to imply, in commenting on the 'varnish' of his form, a value judgment through discussion of technique: on the other hand he can, in another passage, donnishly remark that 'A. E. Housman uses his tripping measures to express the profoundest pessimism'—as though the vulgar lilt weren't a comment on the pessimism's profundity. Perhaps it suffices to say that, for all its ponderous tone and its weighty argumentativeness, this is, in the last resort, not a bad, but a superficial book.

W.H.M.

CHRISTIAN DISCRIMINATION, by Brother George Every,
S.S.M. (*Christian News-Letter Books*, 1/6).

Ill chance leaves us without a review of this book, which has a direct relevance to what may be called the *Scrutiny* 'line,' and will be found very interesting.

PROUST

INTRODUCTION TO PROUST, by Derrick Leon (Kegan Paul, 12/6).

This book is ten years too late. In 1930 there might still have been a place for an introduction to Proust even at this level, but since the publication of Mr. Edmund Wilson's valuable essay in *Axel's Castle* there is none. A good deal of work has been done on Proust since his death and though little of it is first class, it cannot all be relegated to an unscholarly bibliography at the end of a book. There are also a number of facts that have to be taken into account by anybody writing about Proust. It is a fact, for example, that most of us no longer take the same pleasure in his novel that we once did; and the critic has to decide whether this is due to the same sort of snobbishness which has caused the temporary eclipse of Lawrence or whether it points to a very serious limitation in Proust's art. In 1920 Jacques Rivière, who was the finest French critic of his generation, wrote an essay on 'Marcel Proust et la Tradition Classique' in which he argued that Proust's insight and his use of the French language made him the direct descendant of the great masters of the seventeenth century. Mr. Wilson, on the other hand, declares roundly that Proust was 'the first important novelist to apply the principles of Symbolism to fiction.' It seems to me that the truth lies somewhere between these two opinions which are not as irreconcilable as they first appear. The French attach great importance to what they call a writer's *révélation psychologique* and there are many pages of psychological analysis in Proust's work which remind us strongly of the seventeenth-century moralists; but his prose also reveals both the good and bad influence of Symbolism. The work of the writers of this movement undoubtedly contains a good many conceits, a good many images which are mere *jeux de mots*; but it did extend the resources of language and the extraordinary account of Swann's evening at Madame de Saint-Euverte's—particularly the description of the guests with their monocles—where this influence is most marked, is something new in European fiction.

The most determined attack on Proust has come, as one might expect, from the Left. According to their view he is the laureate of a dying society, the apologist of an aristocracy which has retained