

THIRTY POEMS. By Thomas Merton. (New Directions, Norfolk, Connecticut; \$1.00.).

*The Poets of the Year* is a series of poetry booklets, finely printed and including such expected names as George Barker, Dylan Thomas, F. T. Prince and Conrad Aiken. Thomas Merton, we are told, is a monk in an American Trappist abbey; 'his education was in a French lycée, an English public school, Cambridge University and at Columbia, where as an undergraduate he took all the literary honours and edited everything in sight.' In view of all this, perhaps one is less tempted to enquire—as no doubt Mr. Agate might—*que va-t-il faire dans cette galère?*

All the same, the authentic poetic accent of the late thirties (*At once the diplomats start up, white as bread; Is the politician any safer in his offices / Than a soldier shot in the eye?*) seems oddly at variance with the undoubted sincerity of this poet's purpose. But now and then (as in *An Argument: Of the Passion of Christ*) we feel that the gap between what is deeply experienced and the (current) expression of it is filled. The result is a religious poem which, to take one etymology of *religio*, is bound tight, true to the inner discipline of the thing experienced, now expressed. I.E.

RONSARD. By D. B. Wyndham Lewis. (Sheed & Ward; 12s. 6d.).

Against a lively background sketch of Renaissance France, Mr. Wyndham Lewis has picked out in clear, striking features the personality of a great poet of that age. The historical facts, sorted out into somewhat startling, often rather doubtfully picturesque anecdotes, provide a useful setting, and, combined with classical and contemporary references, make this study light and entertaining reading even for the unscholarly. Probably we are saved from an overwhelming dose of compressed knowledge in careful prose by the caustic asides and the harmless but pointed and sceptical commentaries of the author himself.

As to the picture of the poet, Mr. Wyndham Lewis has certainly written with a sympathetic understanding which, if he did not feel, he has managed to convey in convincing tones. Imagination has leapt in to fill the blanks or the sundry unimportant details of Ronsard's life, so that the versatile character of the poet, fluctuating from amorous ecstasies to a cold rage, bursting into flippant song, strumming a pastoral ode or penning patriotic couplets, is presented on all sides with equal vigour. The effect is as vivid as if the man had lived in the last decade, and in achieving this Mr. Wyndham Lewis has succeeded in re-kindling interest in a poet too often by-passed with a sidelong glance at the 'Ode to Cassandre.' He is to be congratulated on this and upon the manner in which he has conveyed a sense of the continuity in the evolution of French poetry; We appreciate particularly the link with nineteenth century soloists such as Baudelaire.

Perhaps Mr. Wyndham Lewis's prose translations of some of the verse quoted will inspire a fresh genius to transcribe these poems for future editions of *Ronsard*. The English subscripts serve their purpose for the English reader, but a French scholar is well advised to skip them if he would appreciate the vitality of sixteenth century French verse. Even the ingenuity of Mr. Wyndham Lewis has had to confess defeat with certain of Ronsard's neat and charming ditties.

As a whole this is a most stimulating study and provides interest to all tastes of reading, being particularly commendable to any who appreciate the character of French Literature.

A. REGNIER.

MOLIERE. Introduction et Notes, par Georges Raeders. (Editions de l'Arbre : 2 vols.)

Molière, as M. Raeders reminds us, belongs not to France but to the world, and an edition of his plays will always be welcome. This particular edition contains all Molière's greatest plays, preceded by an outline of his life and an appreciation of his work.

In the outline Mr. Raeders might have paid more attention to his own dictum; for the years in the Provinces, the problems of Molière's private life, his relations with the Bejart family, the attacks of his enemies, are all too easily passed over by one who sees so plainly 'que plus que chez tout autre écrivain, chez Molière l'homme et l'auteur ne font qu'un.' It was from his own life that Molière worked out his gospel of moderation, departure from which involves trouble for self and for others.

Moving from Molière's life to his works, M. Raeders sets out—without attempting an answer—the usual controversial issues, and the conflicting opinions that critics voiced in Molière's lifetime and are still voicing nearly three centuries later. The plays themselves are accompanied by brief introductory notes explaining the circumstances in which each play was produced. Helpful as these notes are, the student cannot but regret the omission of Molière's own 'Préfaces' and 'Placets.' A glossary and a brief summary of grammatical usages particular to the times are an added help. But the bibliography, though deliberately limited, should at least have included the recent work by Saintonge and Christ: 'Fifty Years of Molière Studies.'

Welcome as this edition of Molière's plays is to the ordinary reader, to the student it cannot help but be disappointing.

J. McNAMARA.

THE CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION OF THE CABALA IN THE RENAISSANCE.

By Joseph Leon Blau. (Columbia University Press; Milford; 15s. 6d.)

The author tells us: 'It is the general theme of this book that the use of Cabala by Christian thinkers was a fad of no lasting sig-