

The post-reformation section is compelling, and much that is the product of recent research has been unobtrusively worked in. Some of the religious glamour with which the native chieftains are usually surrounded is gently dissipated; but the strong Catholic feeling of the masses which was maintained so strikingly by the 'poor friars beggars' and worked on so successfully by the Jesuit missionaries, is allowed its full value. Mr Beckett handles the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with great skill, and having picked his way warily through the events of the last fifty years brings his survey of Irish history to a close with reflections on the current problem of partition, which, though obvious, have not been faced up to fully on either side of the Border. Partition, he thinks, does not depend upon a physical boundary which can be removed by political action; it depends upon very important differences in outlook between two groups of people: and though these differences may be accentuated by political division they will not necessarily disappear as a result of enforced political union: 'The most fundamental difference is probably that of religion. In the republic the Roman Catholic church has a special position assigned to it by the constitution, and though this is rather a matter of prestige than of formal authority the church does exercise an enormous influence on all departments of life, especially on social legislation and on foreign policy. The protestant population, only seven per cent of the whole, has no choice but to accept this position. In an all-Ireland state the protestants would number one quarter of the total population and the friction would be dangerous, if not disastrous. The real partition of Ireland is not on the map but in the minds of men.' Such a viewpoint need not be dismissed airily. Rather the way in which it is met should bear some relation to the sincerity with which it has been put forward.

LEONARD BOYLE, O.P.

GREAT MEN. By François Mauriac. Translated by Elsie Pell. (Rockliff; 15s.)

The 'great men' are all, with one exception, French writers; the French writers being Pascal, Molière, Voltaire (of the *Remarks on Pascal's Pensées*), Rousseau, Chateaubriand, the Guérins, Balzac, Flaubert, Loti, Barrès, Gide, and Radiguet (of *Le Diable au Corps*). It would be unfair to say that this book tells us more about M. Mauriac than about the subjects of his essays, but I think its chief interest can truly be said to lie in the ways, various and complex, in which it brings out M. Mauriac's relation to what he sees as the French tradition in psychological-philosophic-religious writing; his relation, in fact, to what French literature is so peculiarly strong in: its *philosophes* (if the word can be dissociated from the limiting eighteenth-century suggestion). This being so, we must not expect

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dispassionate analytic studies, fully controlled by either the literary-critical or the philosophical discipline, or both—though there are many examples here of shrewd ‘objective’ insight. In so far as he is not registering, in more or less autobiographical terms, his specific personal response to their work, M. Mauriac treats them somewhat as novelist’s characters—perhaps sometimes too much, as Mauriac characters. Thus his central stress in the Molière essay is on the relation, incestuous or quasi-incestuous, between Molière (‘the tragic Molière’) and his illegitimate daughter, and he seems less concerned to evaluate the significance, historical or intrinsic, of (for instance) Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Flaubert, than to bring out their psychological (and theological) interest as ‘cases’. There is, of course, nothing objectionable *per se* about this mode of approach, but in some places certain obsessions of M. Mauriac’s own—obsessions which have done a great deal to deflect, or even stultify, his own talent as an artist—introduce a disturbing vibration, all the more dangerous because of the absence of any clear-cut discipline controlling the study. The best of the essays, in my opinion, is that on Pascal, brief and historical-question-begging as it is (e.g. Pascal’s authorship of the *Discours des Passions de l’Amour*, on which much of the essay’s force depends, is asserted without discussion). It should be read along with that of T. S. Eliot. The articles on the Guérins do not, to an English reader, seem to improve markedly on Arnold’s, and those on Loti and Barrès will not probably convince those who do not already share M. Mauriac’s high estimate of these writers.

The disturbance of judgment I have referred to (it is evident here in the embarrassingly personal resonance) comes out most clearly in the piece on M. Mauriac’s only non-French hero, who is Mr Graham Greene. If Mr Greene be indeed equivalent in interest and significance to (say) Pascal, the (surely necessary?) demonstration would have to be done with some degree of critical detachment. M. Mauriac shows none: he is responding far too wholeheartedly to such un-free preoccupations of Mr Greene’s work as are nearest to his own. It seems apposite to quote Saint-Simon’s remark about Fénelon’s impulsion towards Madame de Guyon: *leur sublime s’amalgama*.

There are some well-reproduced portraits, among which stands out arrestingly the wistful sensuous face of Molière.

W. W. ROBSON

IRELAND AND THE IRISH. By Charles Duff. (Boardman; 15s.)

THE EMERALD ISLE. By Geoffrey Taylor. (Evans Brothers; 12s. 6d.)

There is much in common between the two books listed above. Both are by able writers and mature critics, who—oddly enough—both come from ‘Ascendancy’ Protestant families in Sligo.