

tion, by 'Rosita, de l'Académie racinienne', to the French edition of the contents of the MS. whence these sonnets are taken makes this unwillingly clear. The poems were published in 1692 as the work of Eustache Le Noble and again in 1912; and even though the attribution to Le Noble is doubtful, there is nothing whatever to show that Racine may have been their author. The latest French edition calls itself: *Racine: Poésies religieuses inconnues* (Editions Pierre Clairac, Paris, 1954); it is the English translator who, with doubtful honesty, invents the title *Confessions*.

The poems consist in 128 sonnets, each of which is a paraphrase, verse by verse, of Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143 and 20. The second part of Rosita's edition, which is not included in the English one, is a translation of thirty other psalms—one psalm to a sonnet. The English renderings are agreeable to read and, as far as I have checked them, accurate. The poems, which are in no wise 'confessions' since they are merely paraphrases and translations, were perhaps worth rescuing, but not at the cost of a *supercherie*.

CUTHBERT GIRDLESTONE

INTRODUCTION TO MISTRAL. By Richard Aldington. (Heinemann; 25s.)

This book really fulfils the promise of its title, since it awakens the desire to become even better acquainted with Mistral and his work. This is due not only to Mr Aldington's skill as a writer but even more to that enthusiasm which enables him to understand both the literary problems which confront linguistic minorities, and the special tempo of rural as opposed to urban communities.

Occasionally, indeed, we may feel that he deprecates other writers unduly by comparison with his subject. Thus his contrast between the *Félibrige* and the Symbolist school can hardly be justified: the differences between a literary-linguistic association with certain clearly defined aims, and a group of poets sharing to a very limited extent the same conception of art, are so wide as to invalidate any analogy. Moved by the same admiration, Mr Aldington, in a few instances, appears to blind himself to certain weaknesses in Mistral. Thus he notes no inherent contradiction in Mistral's attitude towards the expulsion of the teaching congregations (1904, not 1880, as stated on p. 162): 'he deplored this attack on liberty, adding however, "it is not my affair".' It is reasonable to point out that Péguy, at that time a militant anti-clerical, and his friend, Bernard Lazare, a Jew, both felt that it was very much their 'affair'—not from love of Catholicism but out of respect for freedom.

These are, however, comparatively minor points, as are too a few relatively unimportant slips due to some unfamiliarity with Catholicism. The essential fact is that Mr Aldington has written a most readable book where he succeeds in recreating Mistral's world. There we find all the harmony of a traditional and in many respect patriarchal way of life. There are numerous charming pen-pictures of that existence which now seems so remote, but none, I think, so delightful as some nine lines (p. 12) where are summed up, with an infinitely delicate touch, the age-old occupations of the people. That this evocation of the past may be somewhat idealized is probable, but if the Provence we see there is not, perhaps, quite that which Mistral really knew, it is indubitably that of which he dreamed and about which he wrote. Mr Aldington's flexible graceful prose is admirably adapted both to his subject and to his translations of Mistral's poetry: his easy colloquial style retains to the maximum point possible the 'feel' of the originals.

K. O'FLAHERTY

FOLKSONG—PLAINSONG: A Study in Origins and Musical Relationships. By G. B. Chambers. (Merlin Press; 18s.)

The main thesis of this book is that the wordless *jubilus* of plainsong derives not from simpler forms of chant but from secular folksong. The argument is based on writings of St John Chrysostom, St Isidore of Seville, St Jerome, St Augustine, Clement of Alexandria, Cassiodorus, etc., with buttresses provided by St Teresa of Avila, Richard Rolle and Rudolf Steiner!

The earlier writers seem to say, however, that the *jubilus* is like the wordless *melismata* of their contemporaries: this is not to say that the two are the same or are in any way necessarily connected. Indeed, there appears to be good evidence for believing that the early Jewish Christians brought melismatic melodies from the Jewish liturgy into the Christian church. No one would deny that folksong was an important factor in primitive chant, but most authorities would agree that the crucial time was earlier than the extraordinarily long and vague period from which Fr Chambers collects his 'evidence'. If the author had moved his theory into the early and even pre-Christian era it would have been more plausible. But he will not accept any connection between Jewish and early Christian music. Since he by no means considers or demolishes all the evidence for the connection his conclusions may seem rather a folky fantasy based purely on jumbles of literary texts and a simple error in logic.

E.T.