

*Slim cunning hands at rest and cozening eyes—
Under this stone one loved too wildly lies;
How false she was, no granite could declare
Nor all earth's flowers, how fair.*

The Region of the Summer Stars is a more difficult poem to read than any one of Mr de la Mare's: it requires some learning on the reader's part and it appears to watch a more formidable horizon, but to the serious lover of poetry *Inward Companion* will offer a primer of design and construction and its range is minute and infinite.

*Go far; come near;
You still must be
The centre of your own small mystery. . . .*

NAOMI ROYDE SMITH.

LETTERS OF MARCEL PROUST. Translated and edited with notes by Mina Curtiss. (Chatto & Windus; 21s.)

Guessing upon whom an author has modelled his characters is a game fraught with dangers: but it is a game which is a necessary (though by no means a full) part of literary biography. Unfortunately, of late, it has been played to excess. The friends and acquaintances of different authors have come to be regarded as their characters, so that the imaginative processes by which characters in fiction are created have been belittled. The result is that critical studies have come to be accepted as substitutes for the works of art which they examine and literary biographies to be taken as means by which by reading one book an author's whole life and works may be known. This is not surprising: it is what one might expect of a period in which human life is considered largely a matter to be judged according to a card-index system of age-groups. It is all so simple. The process can be worked backwards: 'A la Recherche du Temps Perdu is the novel of a homosexual who suffered from an Oedipus complex.' Such has been the fate of Proust at the hands of the pundits. The publication of his letters may help to redress the balance.

'I have been working on a long book', wrote Proust to Louis de Robert, 'which I call a novel because it isn't as fortuitous as memoirs': and therein resides the secret of his art, for his great novel is only fortuitous 'to the degree that life itself is.' Experience for the great novelist is always something which is touched-off life, so that resemblances between his characters and friends are never more than coincidental. If it were otherwise, his fiction would be no more than the adding of a narrative commentary to a family album.

Indeed, the present selections from Proust's correspondence do not provide footnotes to his original work so much as emphasise the power

of his imagination. For with few exceptions, his letters are not especially interesting, and only occasionally, as in the case of his comments on Renan, does one pause to re-read a passage: '.... The Church.... has assumed an influence even over those who were supposed to combat and deny it.... The strides.... made (in the Catholic sense) from Voltaire to Renan are tremendous. Renan is.... still an anti-Christian, but one who has been Christianised; *Graeca capta*, or rather, *Christianismus captus ferum victorem fecit*.' Yet, apart from such exceptions, what stands out is the apparent disparity between the breadth of his work and the narrowness of his life. Something of a hypochondriac, confined for much of the day to his bed, one is amazed at the range of his writing. It poses a problem which seems without human solution; and, advisedly, one uses the word 'human'. For imagination is the link between the seen and unseen world—the eye of the soul; and if to mention such a matter in the case of Proust strains the credulity of the modern pundits, it is but another example of that divorce which has taken place not only between literary biography and fact, but between the conception of art as merely a psychological outpouring and a flowering of the spirit. In redressing the balance, these letters may well prove to be an indirect God-given gift.

NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE.

THE CREATIVE CRAFTSMAN. By John Farleigh. (Bell; 21s.)

Education has nowhere got more completely out of hand than in its tendency for teachers to teach first and foremost in the interests of teachers. And nowhere has this dangerous aberration been more apparent than in the so-called art schools which have almost wholly replaced the old apprenticeship to master craftsmen by classes designed to subserve industrialism or create more teachers. *The Creative Craftsman* is a long step back in the right direction. Mr John Farleigh has interviewed thirteen thriving workshops; questioned their owners on their way of life and how they came by it; and discussed the prospects of any young people embarking on similar careers.

The difference between craftsmanship and most contemporary jobs is its stress on personal responsibility. Its risks and rewards are wholly unlike those of the proletariat and you cannot educate for both on the same lines. Morally there is no doubt which throws up the more valuable citizen or—all things being anything like equal—the more valuable work. If you hark back and imagine Leonardo going to a polytechnic instead of to Verrochio's workshop you will listen more tolerantly to Mr Farleigh's plea for early apprenticeship to master craftsmen and for grants to approved workshops rather than to art schools. Thirteen men and women substantiate his findings. There are two potters, two goldsmiths, two calligraphers, two embroideresses,