

## REVIVALS

**The Rule of Faith.**

By W. P. Paterson, D.D. 8s. 6d. (Hodder &amp; Stoughton.)

**Wesley.**

By James Laver. 5s. (Peter Davies.)

Man, however little he may sometimes be conscious of the fact, is a religious animal; and directly or indirectly, his attitude towards religion governs his whole conduct. History rightly considered, as Dr. Paterson reminds us, is the study of one great religious revival after another, each modifying excesses in its predecessors, and each contributing vitally to the special needs of its own time. Dr. Paterson's work, of which there now appears a fourth and enlarged edition, is already well known. Within its compass it is a remarkably full and lucid outline of the rise and development of the various main branches of the Christian faith, and it achieves a fine measure of impartiality. Its main object is to present an historical summary. But many readers will find peculiar interest in the new last chapter, in which Dr. Paterson reviews modern theological tendencies, states his conviction that another genuine revival is due, and suggests that the next awakening will concentrate emphasis upon the Sermon on the Mount and upon the need of its ethical application to social through personal life.

Many other observers of the signs of the times, who look deeper than its surface chaos, will agree with Dr. Paterson on this point; and among the encouraging features of our day is its vital interest in John Wesley. Here is yet another study of him, in Messrs. Peter Davies's admirable series of short biographies. To present a whole living man in a hundred and sixty pages is almost impossible—at any rate when that man is Wesley, whose public life, embracing such varied activities, extended over sixty years,

with eighteen hours for his average working day. But Mr. Laver's portrait, if necessarily incomplete, is at least alive, and is calculated to serve its main purpose of stimulating further interest.

Mr. Laver obviously approached his task with no instinctive religious sympathy. Retelling the familiar tale of Wesley's meeting with Beau Nash, he complains that previous narrators have been hard upon Nash, except Miss Sitwell, who is equally hard upon Wesley. "It is possible," says Mr. Laver, "to be just to both men. If Wesley was the great civiliser of the lower classes, Nash was the great civiliser of the aristocracy and, if we forget religious questions for a moment, both were working for the same end—the reformation of manners—and both in their different ways were equally successful." Even if we gladly grant that Nash has received excessive ridicule from most of Wesley's biographers, this passage is highly controversial. We have quoted it however because, better than any comment of our own could do, it suggests the writer's angle of vision.

His very detachment sometimes enables him to see more clearly even a theological truth, as when he realises that the gulf which separated Wesley from many of his contemporaries is explained by the fact that "Wesley, while believing firmly in the Atonement of Christ, insisted strongly that 'works' were necessary for *continuance* in a State of Grace." Mr. Laver does not spare Wesley at other times. While exonerating him from all unworthy impulse, he enjoys some fun at the expense of Wesley as lover, and his emphasis upon Wesley's limitations as educationist lacks historical perspective and ignores some important redeeming facts. But his final summing-up of Wesley's character and influence is the more impressive because every glowing word is carefully weighed by an impartial and level-headed investigator, with no "brief" for the defence.

GILBERT THOMAS.

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LOVAT



DICKSON

## A POSTHUMOUS GARLAND

## Odd Memories.

By R. S. Garnett. 7s. 6d. net. (Blackwood.)

All the world seems haunted nowadays by a suspicious dread of sentimentality; but surely one need not be accused of undue sentiment in admitting that there is always a fugitive air of pathos about a posthumous book. To commune as it were with the dead; to respond in spirit to his confidences; and yet to be denied the satisfaction of conveying that response to its rightful owner—these disabilities can hardly fail to touch the reader's heart with vain accessions of regret. And the greater the charm of the book, the deeper the sentiment. The extinction of a vivid personality is a loss to literature, which is often as intimate as the loss of a friend.

Robert Garnett died some three months ago, carrying with him to the grave who knows how much of quaint and humorous reminiscence, of genial zest for life's little ironies and absurdities, and of comprehending sympathy for its griefs and pains? The two volumes of autobiographical fragments which he left behind him make it clear that his was a nature of rare and radiant receptivity, a temperament of the warmest and most companionable philosophy. "How is it," he writes somewhere in a meditative moment, "how is it that trivial happenings of long years gone assume such importance? How is it a banal occurrence even may touch the heart when seen through the mists of time?" The answer is that the gift of transformation rests with the genius of the interpreter, and humorous sympathy is the secret of enchantment. Robert Garnett possessed that secret in a remarkable degree, and was not afraid of letting it transfuse his memory and imagination into a golden glow.

This second gleaning from a wide field of recollection is every bit as fruitful as the first. Once more we are transported to the London of half a century ago, to the lilacs and laburnums of St. John's Wood, with the green Atlas omnibus lumbering along towards those dusty purlieus of the law where Lord Bacon's tree was still standing in the quiet quadrangle, and the room where Dickens wrote

"Pickwick" could be seen across the way. The family of Richard Garnett, omniscient custodian of the British Museum Library, grew up in an old-fashioned, bookish, observant atmosphere; the incidents of their daily life might seem superficially trivial, but they were concerned with names now illustrious in art and letters. They make at any rate truly excellent stories, irradiated with character. We see Dr. Garnett setting out in the fog to spend an evening at the Westland Marstons across Primrose Hill, and helping to lift Swinburne on the table, that he may recite his latest poem—a performance which excited and wearied the poet to such a degree that, when Mrs. Marston went upstairs to bed, she found him fast asleep upon her pillow. The end of that evening was a furious adventure in the fog, which the reader must discover for himself. Then again there is the story of the terrific explosion in the Regent's Canal, when a cargo of gunpowder was ignited from the bargee's pipe; all the neighbourhood was shattered and strewn with wreckage, and the Garnett children watched spellbound from the windows, hoping to see the wild beasts escaping from the Zoo. Those were the days when Thursday evening was eagerly anticipated because the *Athenæum* would appear; when the methods of Jarndyce v. Jarndyce still lingered in the Law Courts, and a trusted old managing clerk would refuse to countenance a typewriting machine, or even a telephone, to which he contemptuously alluded as "that thing." The firm in which young Garnett worked had clients no less mad than Miss Flite, and much more aggressive, and one of the most astonishing anecdotes concerns a raving poetess in Campden Hill, to whom he was sent with £100, all in golden sovereigns, only to flee incontinently downstairs, as the lady leapt from her bed, with shrieks of "Hell-hound!" and ringing slaps on the rosy cheeks of her handmaiden, because she had been interrupted in reading her verse aloud. "How is it that trivial happenings of long years ago assume such importance?" Simply because humour and sympathy have transmuted them into the shining metal of Life.

## SHAKESPEARE RECONSIDERED

## The Shakespearean Tempest.

By G. Wilson Knight. 12s. 6d. (Oxford University Press; London: Humphrey Milford.)

Shakespeare has by this time been so exhaustively catalogued and card-indexed that Shakespearean criticism, whether "textual" or "interpretative," has become a game as elaborate and stereotyped as Mah-Jong; one can merely shuffle, select, reject and rearrange. This book is the latest, and one of the most fascinating of recent rearrangements of the text.

It has long been known that certain words, certain images, tend to recur consistently, associated with similar contexts, in different plays. Thus a few years ago Mr. E. E. Kellett discovered how—and Professor George Rylands explained why—in five distinct places the words *spaniel*, *candy* and *fawning* occur together. Subsequently Professor Caroline Spurgeon and Mgr. Kolbe, working independently, examined a number of the plays in detail from this angle. Professor Knight however, while making full use of the valuable analyses of the latter, and armed with a critical apparatus perhaps finer than that of any of his predecessors in this line of research, has worked on the whole Shakespearean corpus and has achieved a comprehensive and on the whole convincing synthesis.

Taking "The Tempest" as the hub of Shakespeare's universe, he correlates radially about it his groups of "recurrent imagery." There is in fact suspiciously little of significance that is not swept into the vortex of some storm—we are assured that "plots are built round tempests . . . rather than that tempests are inserted into plots." But if this sounds a trifle arbitrary, we can only add that Professor Knight is quite aware of the pitfalls of a method which tends to regard every metaphor as a leitmotiv

## By Hugh Gordon Porteus

forced to obey the magnetic behests of an apparently home-made pattern; and that at every step he compels our assent. We feel even that Shakespeare invented the pattern, whether or not he used it consciously, and that Professor Knight has merely rediscovered and transposed the instantaneous process of creation into what he calls "the slower consciousness of logic and intellect." (Shakespeare in slow-motion!) The plays are dealt with in chronological order, to reveal "a steady process of simplification" until, in the last phase: "the poetic image usurps the right to direct plot and action," and "poetry thus becomes doubly poetic." In fine, it is Shakespeare the poet that Professor Knight presents:

"perhaps the greatest poet. And by that I mean, not a writer who is merely facile in the magic turning of fine phrases and the inspired melodies of rhythmic speech; but a poet whose every effect of metaphor and verbal music, of simile and description, stage-direction and symbol, plot and action and personification, are all interwoven, in each play, into one exquisite and significant design. . . ."

Aiming, on the plane of "language," at the kind of integration which "The Lion and the Fox" attempted on the plane of "personality," Professor Knight is concerned too "to safeguard Shakespeare for the general reader from the disintegration of misguided scholarship."

"The Shakespearean Tempest," perhaps more than the author's previous volumes, is likely to cause a flutter of academic gowns; but the general reader, if I am typical, will find that it really does refresh and enrich his experience, not only of Shakespeare and the Elizabethan world, but of all poetry, for Professor Knight throws out many a fertile comment in passing on Donne, and Hopkins, and Eliot.