

## 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.

## LUNG-FISH AND LIFE

**Kamongo.**

By Homer W. Smith. 5s. (Jonathan Cape.)

**Materialism.**

By J. S. Haldane, C.H., F.R.S. 3s. 6d. (Hodder &amp; Stoughton.)

Fish that drown when you put them in water, atavistic survivals in the "blind alley of evolution," "living pages out of life's history," Kamongo—in short, lung-fish. These are the amazing freaks of nature with which Mr. Homer W. Smith, showman, has produced an amusing side-show to science. Mr. Smith, it should be explained, is a young American scientist, who has "written up," in semi-fictional form, his Kamongo quest in darkest Africa. It is a pity that a writer with such a faculty for producing vivid prose as Mr. Smith should have thought it necessary to adopt the criminally conversational methods of a Mrs. Markham to "put his story across." Perhaps the principal reason is that Mr. Smith has not only a "story" but a "message."

His philosophy may be described as that of a desperate latter-day evolutionist. So desperate, indeed, that he can find no beauty in life, believing as he does that it is "like a whirlpool stirred up in the dust by sunlight that, spinning on and on of its own momentum, presses always against its environment where the blind alleys are cut off and the rest escapes through different ways of spinning." Can one, he asks, find beauty in the temple of flesh, which is merely "choking refuse, aching for immortality with an ache that is naught but the shriek of a brake on a wheel . . . the doom of death was upon it at the moment of birth."

Mr. Smith has created an excellent foil for this fatalistic creed in the form of an Anglican padre, "a man of scholarship, culture and power," who is cornered on board ship by the impersonal young scientist (through whom Mr. Smith speaks), and cunningly drawn into a conversation about the biological significance of lung-fish. "Oxonian and *soigné*" though he is, the padre proves a most restrained and useful conversationalist who skilfully assists the young scientist to unfold his ideas.

It is comforting to turn from the terrifying grapple with reality of "Kamongo" to the more gentle approach to the same theme by another distinguished votary of science, Professor J. S. Haldane. "Materialism" is a collection of essays and addresses, all of which bear upon the subject from which the book takes its title and which combine to show that the writer, scientist though he is, believes that, however great the practical value of the physico-chemical interpretation of our experience, it can only fail in its incompleteness when applied to the phenomena of life. His conclusion is that a spiritual interpretation is essential, and this he finds in a religion based upon experience, a religion in which God does not "dwell apart in perfection and omnipotence," but embraces and is part of the universe. "Our universe," says Professor Haldane, "is no mere physical or biological universe, but a spiritual universe of values which can only be expressed as the active manifestation of personality in an indefinite or chaotic background. Our experience implies also that these values are no mere values for individual personality, so that within our apparent individual personalities is the unifying and all-embracing personality of God. Realisation of this gives us religion."

Between the evolutionist morbidity of Mr. Homer W. Smith and the generous pantheism of Professor Haldane there is evidently a wide gulf, yet neither of these books seems to contain the constructive reality which Mr. Julian Huxley produced in the "scientific humanism" of "What Dare I Think?" At any rate the quantity of metaphysical literature written by scientists of late seems to indicate that science has arrived at an age of "religious doubt," and to the layman this should be hopeful rather than disturbing.

CHRISTOPHER SALTMARSH.

THE SHAKESPEARE HEAD DEFINITIVE BRONTË

THE  
BRONTËSTHEIR LIVES,  
FRIENDSHIPS AND  
CORRESPONDENCE

Edited by

T. J. WISE and J. A. SYMINGTON

4 vols.

Illustrated

£3 net

❑ "The story of the Brontë family is fully and finally told in these four volumes."—*The Morning Post*

❑ "A documentary museum. . . . Now at length the Wise-Symington material allows a reasonable decision on these modern calumnies. One feels nothing but gratitude for this pious homage to a great Yorkshire and English sisterhood."—*Manchester Guardian*

Previously published:

THE NOVELS. 11 vols. £6.17.6 net

To follow:

The Unpublished Works The Poems  
The Bibliography

BASIL BLACKWELL · OXFORD

will be happy to send a prospectus

A SPARKLING AND UNUSUAL  
NOVEL, AMUSING, SATIRICAL  
AND ARRESTING

★

ACORNE  
HOG

By SHAMUS FRAZER

MESSRS. CHAPMAN & HALL believe that in "Acorned Hog" they have made one of those rare and exciting "finds" which add the zest of sportsmanship to the risks and responsibilities of a publisher's daily routine.

"The first novel of an Oxford undergraduate and blessedly unlike most of the usual semi-autobiographical documents . . . genuinely funny."—RALPH STRAUS (*Sunday Times*)

"Frivolous, gay, malicious, irresponsible."  
—LIONEL HALE (*News Chronicle*)

"Lively and dashing."—PHYLLIS BENTLEY

Of all Bookshops and Libraries. 7/6 net