

than he has so far arrived at, but he has not achieved that synthesis of heart and brain which would here make him a greater, and a truer, poet.

ELIZABETH KING.

THE SPIDER IN THE ROSE. By Robert H. Hill. (Hilda Devereux; 8s. 6d.)

This is an historical novel dealing with the Walpole plot against the life of Queen Elizabeth. It possesses also some of the superficial characteristics of the detective but the puzzle is too easy to make that line worth tracing. There is also an amount of character drawing, most of it unconvincing; Stanley, the born courtier, is too brittle for flesh and blood and there is too much cloak and dagger about the base plotters. Philip Gamon, the adventurous rustic from Devon, is the central character. Contact with the world develops his mind only fitfully and he shows sad lapses into bucolic simplicity. He remains a bookish type to the end: he shows no signs of susceptibility to the tender passion; all his thoughts are set on saving Gloriana—when he's not reading a sonnet by Shakespeare (though 'he did not even recognise it as a sonnet'). Therefore when he returns to Barnstaple hand in hand with the devoted Anne and we hear the wedding bells ringing across the moors we can only presume that it was leap year.

Francis Bacon's is the portrait you would expect; it has merely been taken out of the gallery, not repainted. He is obviously inspired by his own dictum 'to dwell among things soberly . . . to look into and dissect the nature of this real world'. Here as elsewhere in the book there is too much dissection and not enough sober dwelling. While Gamon is brooding by the banks of Thames—not on love but on the wickedness of plotters, though he's never quite sure about the Jesuits—Bacon is trying to live up to what the professors of Elizabethan Life and Thought have made of him. It makes him painfully self-conscious.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE WINTER'S TALE. A Study by S. L. Bethell. (Staples; 10s. 6d.)

A book on 'The Winter's Tale' is immediately welcome because it turns attention to an important and neglected Shakespearean play, and Mr Bethell's spirited defence of his critical principles is timely. 'The critic who is self-consciously aware of holding a particular view of life is much less prone to fall into error than he who believes himself "impartial", "scientific", a "pure scholar".' That is excellent. Besides principle there is scholarship which forms the foundation for Part I, and in Part II close and accurate interpretation of the text. After a graceful tribute to Dr Tillyard we know what sort of interpretation to expect; the principle of multi-consciousness and the analogical view are not easy to apply, but Mr Bethell writes clearly and

both interests and instructs his reader, rare qualities in a critic. The link with the tragedies might have been forged more strongly, for resurrection does not annul the conflict between good and evil and the fulfilment in *kenosis* itself is an important element in both tragedy and high comedy. While one feels that more might have been made of ambivalence and the intrusion of the 'unredeemed world' in the miracle plays as factors in Shakespeare's inheritance, one feels on the other hand that in matters of detail Mr Bethell tends to be 'plus royaliste que le Roi'. Not all ritual symbolism refers to the Mass and we are not always convinced that 'grace' possesses the explicitly Christian meaning.

The last chapter, 'Conclusion', also raises doubts. So long as we think of nature and supernature as in a horizontal and not a vertical relationship we shall find tension and not balance in the Middle Ages. Only a belief in the interpenetration of nature and grace can be responsible for (*pace* Mr C. S. Lewis) St Thomas's treatment of married *love*, for St Louis of France (a saint and a man happily fulfilled in marriage), for William Langland's determination after fifteen years to finish his poem and pursue Saint Truth (cf. N. Coghill, *The Pardon of Piers Plowman*). These and many more facts of history incline one to agree with Mr E. I. Watkin rather than with the less optimistic historians. That however most emphatically does not lead one to mistrust the critic who finds the desired optimism in Shakespeare; but it does mean that the optimism is Shakespeare's inheritance and not his discovery. Beyond all this Mr Bethell remains a critic of the highest rank.

G.M.

COMPANION TO THE STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE. MACBETH. By Rev. Reginald F. Walker, C.S.Sp., M.A. (Browne & Nolan; 2s.)

In presenting yet another study of Shakespeare, the author need give no apology, even if its object were not so different from all former essays. Anything that helps our literary and dramatic appreciation of the immortal playwright will always find a welcome. In this cheap and well-produced study, the mature critic, the university student, the secondary schoolboy, and above all, the teacher will find many new angles of character interpretation—that alone justifies the present little volume.

But the author, himself a teacher in one of Ireland's largest secondary schools, has come along to supply a longfelt want, the need to study our Shakespeare as it is—a vehicle of Catholic thought, philosophy and right living. 'It is safe to say that there is not a single Shakespearean drama in school use which is not capable of yielding some of the most profitable principles of right living'.

It is the author's intention to show us such principles in this and in the other works of Shakespeare which he proposes to study. How far this aim has been achieved in the present volume may be seen in that simultaneous unfolding of character, and application of moral