

THE FURNIVAL BOOKS

THE KEY OF THE FIELD. By T. F. POWYS. With a Foreword by SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARREN and a full-page Woodcut by RAY GARNETT.

THE HESSIAN PRISONER. By H. E. BATES. With a Foreword by EDWARD COPPARD and a full-page Line Drawing by JOHN AUSTEN.

THE MAN FROM KILASHELAN. By A. E. COPPARD. With a Foreword by the AUTHOR and a Woodcut by ROBERT GIBBING.

THE STRAITS, THE WORLD, AND THE WOMAN. By RHYA DAVIES. With a Foreword by LIAM O'FLAHERTY and an Illustration by FRANK C. PAGE. (William Jackson, 10s. 6d. net each.)

The publishers of these slim and elegant volumes, bound in buckram each in a different colour, express the hope that "they will enable the man with a slender purse to possess a set of books that will include work by some of the best short-story writers and artists of the day and, at the same time, be finely printed and bound." Each volume is signed by the author, and the edition will be limited to 550 numbered copies. To judge from the first four numbers now before us, the man with the slender purse will get good value for his money. The medium octavo size is not too large to hold conveniently in one hand, the paper is fine and stout, and the 16-point Poliphilus type used by the Clarendon Press in the printing is grateful to the eye. Only one artist, it will be observed, has produced an "illustration," and we congratulate Mr. Pope on the vivacity with which he renders the scene of Bryn Watts's tardy revolt against the domination of women. The other three artists have expressed something of their own rather than of the author's, as they had a full right to do. Yet, on the score of realism, we should remark that Mr. Austen's fine drawing of the Hessian prisoner makes him a far more lugubrious being than Mr. Bates presents him, and the coveted field depicted by Mr. Ray Garnett is obviously less than the twelve acres demanded by the text.

Books of this kind are intended to satisfy a demand which, at best, is complex. At worst it is a demand only for something pleasant to hold and look at, a *biblot*, the contents of which add nothing to its value. On this, the pure book-collector's point of view, the story might equally well be written by any dunce, since the last thing the owner would do would be to read it. The pure reader, on the other hand, no matter how large his wealth, is as unlikely to buy one short story at a time as a hungry man is to buy individual biscuits. The truly satisfied being is he who, like a solitary but punctilious diner, can sip the essence and delight in the setting at the same time. We need, therefore, do little more than give a foretaste of the particular essence, by concretions of considerable reputation, here set before him. Mr. Powys's fable is about Uncle Tiddy, who was deprived of the twelve-acre field through the machinations of Grandmother Trot, and thereafter hung about the gate to that desolate pasture or searched vainly for the key until, in his last days, he called upon Squire Jar, the owner, and Squire Jar coming, though he had hitherto acquiesced in the unjust dealings of his steward, gave him the golden key and everlasting repose. The thought of death's repose is a familiar one in Mr. Powys's work, and he treats it more nobly than he treats life's injustice. Mr. Bates's story is the most beautiful of the four, because of its simplicity and deep feeling. It relates no more than how Jasper and Clara Bird took a German prisoner of war to work on their little holding, how Johann won their hearts, and what love grew up between these three souls until poor Johann died from an injury; but it justifies Dr. Garnett fully when he says: "beyond question Mr. Bates has the secret of creating living men and women and disclosing the springs of their character."

Mr. Coppard's experiment in the Irish vein is the clearest of the four, also the most amusing; and we are surprised to be told in his foreword that it has been consistently rejected by English and American editors. We should have thought that the ludicrous account of the clerk of the court's attempt to swear the man from Kilasheelan by itself would have won immediate acceptance. At all events, it is a good story wherein we learn how the man from Kilasheelan persuaded Tom Tool to break out of the lunatic asylum with him and go to find the former's grand cousin at Belly-govven, and how, in spite of having forgotten "his little name," they find him in the person of Peter Corevan, who lies under sentence of death for murder. We will not divulge the sequel, for surprise is an element of this tale. Mr. Rhys Davies's Welsh miner, who liked nothing but gazing at the stars, yet suffered two women to make him do all manner of other things, till he leapt out of his sick bed and righted his wrongs, but died of his daring, is a sympathetic being; but the Celtic inversions of the dialogue, to a Saxon ear, read somewhat monotonously.

Messrs. Martin Hopkinson's forthcoming publications include a book of personal recollections by Sir Alfred Hopkinson, K.C., which they hope to have ready towards the end of May; "China's Hour," a book on China by John Nind Smith, formerly Professor of Education in the University of Hongkong; and "The Block-House," a collection of short stories, by Don Jose Diaz Fernandez, written round the Rif War in Morocco, with an introduction by Walter B. Harris.