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RURAL LIFE.

IN "Hedge-Trimnings" (Faber and Faber, 7s. 6d.), Mr. A. G. Street has forsaken his mistress Fiction and has returned to his sober and unaffected country spouse the Essay with the same happy results that came of his former faithfulness to her in "Farmer's Glory." The book is a collection of broadcast talks and reflective sketches of country life, and "the title, 'Hedge Trimnings,' was chosen because in effect the book consists of some trimmings from the uneven hedge of a rural mind. Some readers may find a few thorns amongst them, others may pick out a useful switch or two, and it is the author's hope that here and there a shred of sincere beauty may be found, as in every hedge lurks an occasional flower." Anyone who has ever trimmed a hedge will know that it is hard, hand-skinning work, and anyone who has ever tried to put down his reflections on rural life will know, too, that that is hard, heart-skinning work: it is as hard to trim the hawthorn into a straight line as it is to face the truth about modern rural life. But Mr. Street is both a good farmer and a good writer. His sketches altogether refresh and delight in their unaffected sobriety and perspicacity. The tone of them is gossipy and intimate and yet at the same time shrewd and restrained. He writes on haymaking, cows, harvest, the agricultural labour, camping, the law of trespass, eggs, rural economy—indeed, on all the old time-worn but not worn-out subjects, and he brings to all of them that independent, humorous, sagacious type of mind that is as rare in literary as it is in agricultural life.

"All Souls' Night" (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.) is Mr. Hugh Walpole's third collection of short stories. It is interesting to note that he has written nearly thirty novels, so that he would seem to be yet another example of that type of novelist who amuses himself with the short story in the intervals of what he regards as more serious work. The stories in "All Souls' Night," indeed, strike one as being the products of a novelist's idle moments. Not that they are incompetent or boring because of this. Mr. Walpole "wants to make yer flesh creep," and stories like "Seashore Macabre," "Mrs. Lunt," and "Tamhelm" do succeed in making the flesh creep horribly, and in the case of "Tamhelm" nauseatingly. As literature they are not quite so stimulating.

"The Alley of Flashing Spears" (Sampson Low, 7s. 6d.) is a posthumous collection of stories of the late Donn Byrne. They are representative of his peculiar and overrated talent, which was half-facile and half-genuine, never quite facile enough to be disregarded and never quite genuine enough to be considered seriously as literature.

H. E. BATES.