

which is a Cross between a Gugg and a Yap."

Distinctly blah, Mr. Ade, distinctly blah.

Hand-Made Fables. By George Ade. Doubleday, Page and Co.

SWINBURNE AND PETER PAN

By Raymond M. Weaver

QUEEN VICTORIA and the Red Queen that Alice found in the looking-glass were both great queens. Victoria would doubtless have found the Red Queen a little gaudy—and they would doubtless have exhibited together the hostile amenities of women with strong minds. But Victoria used to indulge earnest conversations with Gladstone—an indulgence that vastly heightens her comic charms. It is reported that on one occasion when Victoria and Gladstone touched upon poets-laureate as a detail of state business, Victoria enriched the canons of criticism by the pronouncement: "I am told that Mr. Swinburne is the best poet in my dominions". Some malicious wit had evidently been trying to tamper with Victoria's sense of respectability. No "proper" age, as a matter of sober fact, has ever left behind it so much that is fundamentally improper or morally vicious as has the Victorian: and there is adequate irony in the fact that the most courageously "proper" of queens should have singled out for second-hand primacy among poets a man who so flagrantly violated—except in his excessive drinking—all of the sacred conventionalities of the reign. Gladstone doubtless aided the

queen to a more orthodox evaluation of Swinburne: perhaps he told her which of the "Songs before Sunrise" she should not read. And he may have reported by hearsay some of the items of Swinburne's life.

Swinburne's "Life" has since been written, with some attempt at fulness, by Edmund Gosse; a bulk of Swinburne's letters have been collected and edited. Except to tickle the pruriency of lovers of gossip, or to whet the cravings of clinical psychologists, it is not obvious why further personal details of Swinburne's life should be printed and sold. Coulson Kernahan—author of an earlier book on Swinburne and his group entitled "In Good Company"—now comes forward with a second volume on the same subject: "Swinburne as I Knew Him". Thanks to the admissions of Mr. Gosse's "Life", Mr. Kernahan feels now justified in dropping his earlier reserve for a more contemporary "wise frankness". Those who read into this admission, however, a promise of lurid revelations, have mistaken either Swinburne's indiscretions or Mr. Kernahan's wisdom. "Though I have written frankly of Watts-Dunton, as well as of Swinburne, and have not sought to paint him as other than he was, and so not without human failings", is Mr. Kernahan's amiable admission, "my affection for him, and the honour in which I bear him, have only deepened with the passing of years."

The book leads off with four unimportant letters from Swinburne to his cousin, the Honorable Lady Henniker Heaton. This flat introductory flourish heralds ten thin gossipy essays. The first, "The Story of a Dear Deceit", recounts how Watts-Dunton, by rhetoric and sentimentality, reformed Swinburne of an ambitious consump-

tion of brandy and left him with a taste for beer to solace his final years. And Swinburne's later writings suggest the danger of tampering with a poet's drinks. The second sketch, "Oh, Those Poets", gives another example of Watts-Dunton's insight into and patience with Swinburne's petulant excitability: on this occasion Swinburne having literally, in his thin, reedy, and shrill voice, "talked himself drunk". "George Borrow in a Frock-coat" is Watts-Dunton, "an eminently respectable suburban solicitor, conservative of habit and tastes" who used to bore his friends—and Swinburne in particular, with the mild delusion that he was at heart "half a gypsy and all a Bohemian". The tenth and last "chapter" wears unabashed the caption "All my memories of him are glad and gracious memories". Mr. Kernahan here contumeliously equates the "artistic temperament" with "erratic mediocrity": terms too trivial to compass Swinburne's "genius". Swinburne is pressed into the congregation of "the great" and in peroration is pronounced "the divinest and most majestic singer of the Sunrise and the Sea, yet, none the less, an immortal youth, a Peter Pan of poetry who never grew old, but remained in love with Life, in love with Love, and in love with Song, to his own life's end". This "immortal youth"—who in writing about a harlot composed a learned and sympathetic and indecent parody on the Litany of the Blessed Virgin—must have been a naughty and precocious child. Mr. Kernahan, who finds Swinburne and Peter Pan well-mated playfellows, is an original and diverting critic. But poor Peter Pan!

Swinburne. As I Knew Him. By Coulson Kernahan. John Lane Co.

A NEW HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

By Wilbur Cortez Abbott

WHATEVER reservations one may have as to the completeness of her account, however he may differ with some of her conclusions, no one can deny that Mrs. Webster has written an extraordinarily interesting book about the French Revolution. In the main her thesis is that this great movement was not, in any real sense, a popular uprising; that it was produced, especially on the side of its more terrible episodes, by a relatively small group, centring in the king's cousin, the Duke of Orleans; and that it was a true conspiracy, instigated by him and his followers, aided and abetted by Prussian influence, and sympathized with, if not actually helped, by certain radical elements in England. And not the least interesting of her conclusions is that the elements of unrest in the world today—"the subversives", the "*enragés*"—are not unmindful of the same methods and the same support as that given to their forebears of 1789.

Her thesis is not wholly new, but nowhere, perhaps, has it been worked out in such detail, with such completeness, and with such a single eye to its overwhelming influence and conclusions. It may be—it is—but one side of the truth, but it is a stronger case for that and it produces thought. There is no one, looking on the world and its peculiar phenomena today, who will not be interested—and, it may be, better informed—in reading this terrible story.

What remains to be said is this. It is all but inconceivable, even taking into account the political inertia of the masses, that a system so deeply