meanwhile, by shifting the dead weight of antique authority, and by clearing away the neo-classic lumber, the geometric spirit was preparing the way for the return of a new Nature, and for a poetry which should devote itself 'moins au talent qu'à l'esprit, moins aux ornements qu'au fond des choses.' (p. 393.)

For the convenience of some readers, I will mention the titles of the remaining articles collected in the book: 'Pascal in Debate' by The Rev. H. F. Stewart; 'English Architecture during the Seventeenth Century' by H. S. Goodhart-Rendel; 'Words and Music' by Professor Sir Donald Francis Tovey; 'Phalaris and Phalarism' by H. W. Garrod.

This book, packed as it is with the learning of specialists mobilized from various universities all over Europe, is not only a fitting tribute to one who has done so much to explore and enliven this important period, but also must be of great value to every student and reader who cannot help being conscious of some close resemblance in their way of thought between the seventeenth century and our own time. —E. SAYAMA

"THE SUMMING UP" AND "W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM"

THE SUMMING UP. By W. Somerset Maugham.
Heinemann. 1938. 10s. 6d.

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM. By Richard A Cordell.
Nelson. 1937. 8s. 6d.

Mr. W. Somerset Maugham does not like The Summing Up to be called an autobiography. This is a book, he says, in which he is going to give some kind of order to his thoughts on various subjects that he has lightly or seriously touched in his works. He says: "I have long thought I should like to make such an attempt and more than once, when starting on a journey that was to last for several months, have determined to set about it.—I have been held back by the irksomeness of setting down my thoughts in my own person.—Long habit has made it more comfortable for me to speak through the creatures of my invention.—But now I can afford to put it off no longer.—An occasional glance at the obituary column of The Times has suggested to me that the
sixties are very unhealthy; I have long thought that it would exasperate me to die before I had written this book and so it seemed to me that I had better set about it at once. When I have finished it I can face the future with serenity, for I shall have rounded off my life's work.—This book must be egotistic.—I write this to disembarrass my soul of certain notions that have hovered in it too long for my comfort.” (pp. 7–11)

Quite naturally there is hardly anything new in this book for the reader familiar with Mr. Maugham's other works. Nevertheless this is an interesting piece. As may be surmised by the above citation, this is, so to speak, a random talk with little concern for reader's amusement, for artistic restrictions and for many other similar considerations which a novel or a play would usually require. This is a book in which Mr. Maugham, the man, speaks frankly. And we know he is one of the toughest sort of men, with a varied and interesting life as a dramatist, novelist and world-wide traveller. He was even a member of the British Intelligence Department during the War. We have good reason to expect some talks from him.

There are four sections—on style, on drama, on fiction and on metaphysics—with his experiences of life stated here and there occasionally. He tells us in the first how he began his career by trying to imitate the ornamental style of Pater and Wilde and how he got rid of it subsequently. In these passages we may perceive the change of literary taste of the time. He is not a stylist. To him Voltaire is the best prose writer in the world. Among English writers he thinks very highly of Swift. Of the style of The Tale of a Tub he says he can not imagine that English can be better written. It may not surprise us much, therefore, when he says, “King James's Bible has been a very harmful influence on English prose.” (p. 36) He detests its flowery imagery, its powerful vocabulary, its grandiloquence. Lucidity, simplicity and euphony are to him the three most important qualities of prose. This seems, however, somewhat puzzling when we consider his views on the relativity of value and especially his sense of humour. It is a historical fact that the Authorized Version of the Bible has enriched English prose, although in quite an opposite way to his liking. Why is it that he is so narrow-minded about style when he is quite generous about men?

On drama, he has already brilliantly discussed its various subjects in the six prefaces to his collected plays. Here they are only more elaborately stated. Perhaps more interest arises from the autobiographical remarks on the days when he was producing Lady Frederick for the first time at the Court Theatre. Then he was in the most difficult circum-
stances of his life. Of the many troubles usually occurring behind the
scenes of the theatre he tells us candidly.

In the section on fiction, after speaking of the ephemeral nature of a
writer’s fame—“The publishers will tell you the average life of a novel
is ninety days” (p. 191)—he declares that the writer’s only safety is to
find his satisfaction in his own performances. Here, as elsewhere, his
chief concern is to see things as they really are without beautifying
them with emotion. There are some other interesting remarks in this
section such as his criticisms of technician-novelists like Henry James,
of psycho-analytical novels and of the French and the Russian schools
of short story writing. Through these he makes clear his standpoint
as a story-teller-novelist.

The last section on metaphysics makes rather tedious reading. It is
worked only to prove that philosophers embraced such and such beliefs
not because they were led to them by their reason, but because their
temperaments forced these beliefs on them. We have only to pay some
strained smiling respects to the endless list of the names of philosophers
from Descartes to Einstein to whom Mr. Maugham refers.

Mr. Richard A Cordell’s _W. Somerset Maugham_ was published last
November. He says he was allowed to read _The Summing Up_ in type-
script before its publication, so he wanted nothing materially. I wonder,
however, if it was happy for him to have been so fully equipped with
materials.

The book is in five parts called Biographical, The Novelist, Dramatist,
Writer of Short Stories and Critic and Traveller. He proceeds
methodically through all the Maugham’s works. It is a pity for Mr.
Cordell that Maugham has said almost everything about his life and
works himself. Nothing seems to have been left for Mr. Cordell but
to repeat them in more or less order. And the result is that he has
written a book chiefly convenient for those who want to know some-
thing about Maugham without reading any of his books. In spite of
the wealth of information and notwithstanding the generally nice dis-
 crimination this book lacks something important. At the beginning
of the “Biographical” part, he presents an imaginary picture of Somerset
Maugham at a luncheon table in a literary club, with his companion
utterly absorbed in his brilliant talks. This strikes me as a symbol of
the book. It is heartily to be regretted that the luncheon companion
had not something of his own to say in estimation of Maugham as a
man and a writer.

—TSUTOMU URDA