

ture. The poems in the book are undistinguishable in substance and style, and the dramatic vignettes are thin and sentimental. Longer works are represented only by summaries and excerpts, but there is nothing to indicate that they are any better than the short pieces. This should not be taken, however, as evidence that Mormon writers are less successful than Mormon painters and musicians. There is a significant amount of good poetry and fiction being written in the Church, but either it has not come to the notice of the editors of this volume or else their tastes are less reliable in this area than in others.

In his preface to the book, Dean Wheelwright cautions the reader "not to draw final conclusions from this volume. It does not presume to delimit Mormon art." No doubt this is the key to appreciating *Mormon Arts, Volume One*. The book is weakest when it does attempt to delimit Mormon art, and strongest when it is most tentative and open. It is neither the first nor the last word on Mormon art, but it does break ground that can now benefit from more intensive cultivation.

## Intimate Portraits

JOHN STERLING HARRIS

*The Rummage Sale*. By Donald R. Marshall. Provo, Utah: Heirloom Publications, 1972. 141 pp. \$3.75, hardback. \$2.50, paperback.

In that everlasting discussion on when we are going to have a Mormon literature, the anticipated writer of the great Mormon story is usually expected to be a Tolstoi or a Melville who will tell it as an epic. Now comes a fascinating book by Donald R. Marshall called *The Rummage Sale*. It is unquestionably Mormon and is also very good, but it is not an epic at all. It is instead a series of short stories that are rather closer to William Dean Howells or Sarah Orne Jewett.

The resulting tales come out as honest, intimate portraits of common people in small Utah towns. Instead of struggling with the great issues of truth and error or good and evil, they grapple with the problems of their own identities versus community and family expectations, with small town parochialism versus sophistication, or with the conflict of stability versus change.

One such portrait is that of Thalia Beale, a shy old maid from Ephraim, who after her mother's death takes her savings and makes a trip to California—managing to spend a month in Pacific Grove and Carmel, pretending to herself that she is living a cultivated life before returning to the drabness of her home. (*Dialogue* readers will remember this story from the Autumn 1972 issue.) Another story, "All the Cats in Zanzibar," is the journal of LaRena Homer from American Fork who takes a grand tour to the Holy Land and finds it inferior to Utah. "May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You" is the outrageous correspondence between Elder Calbert Dunkley and Floydene Wallup—a kind of Ring Lardner story with characters who are embarrassingly Mormon. "The Sound of Drums" is a story of a young man from Heber who earns a Ph.D. in the East and returns on a visit to be embarrassed at the narrowness and provinciality of his family and home town. Here, as in other stories in the volume, Marshall's

two-edged pen reveals the returnee as not only educated but also snobbish and insensitive.

Although Marshall's characters tend to be provincial, they emerge as believable, familiar people, and their foibles are shown with no more malice than would occur in parlor talk about absent relatives held in affection.

The time of the stories is the recent present, but there is a pervading sense of past tradition and habit. The pioneer ancestors of the characters are there as ghosts in the background, and the feeling is enhanced by Marshall's occasional photographs of old Utah homes. These help, together with a few of his poems, to give the book a sense of unity.

The style of the stories is varied, and ranges from echoes of Sinclair Lewis, J. D. Salinger, and Sherwood Anderson to a manner reminiscent of the previously mentioned Lardner, Jewett and Howells. But such comparisons are not really fair. Marshall's own strong voice comes through constantly, and he has an uncanny ear for rural speech and an eye for significant detail in scene and artifact.

Some stories are stronger than others, but I doubt that readers will agree on which are the best. Plainly it is the best collection of stories about Mormon life that has yet appeared—another evidence of the naissance of Mormon literature.

## James E. Talmage: A Personal History

JAMES B. ALLEN

*The Talmage Story; Life of James E. Talmage—Educator, Scientist, Apostle.* By John R. Talmage, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1972. 246 pp. \$3.95.

James E. Talmage was one of the most significant Mormon leaders in the early twentieth century. Internationally known scientist, outstanding educator, Apostle, and author of some of the most enduring theological works in the Church, Talmage has had permanent influence on the lives and thought of the Mormon people, and his life is one of those most worth studying.

*The Talmage Story* is a sympathetic, heart-warming, intensely interesting account of the life of James E. Talmage, written by his youngest son. It is not a scholarly work in the sense that scholars would expect interpretive analysis of the times and circumstances related to Talmage's career. Indeed, the author specifically denies any attempt at such interpretation, "this being the field of historians, who have devoted a great deal of attention to this era and doubtless will devote a great deal more in the future" (p. 88). But once scholars overcome their first blush of dismay at these omissions they, along with most other readers, should find much enjoyment from the book.

The omission of much historical analysis is serious enough, however, to warrant brief comment on what one might look for in a more searching biographical study of such a prominent Church leader. Only sixty-four pages are devoted to the twenty-two years that Talmage was a General Authority of the Church, while sixty-six pages are given to the first twenty-six years of his life and 108 to what might be termed the twenty-three middle years. The result is that the period in which he performed his most note-