

—only the poor feckless religious enthusiast that the terrible Hermiston had taken to wife. The only worldliness she ever shows is in her evasive defence of her lord to their child, who asked uncomfortable questions when the rabble denounced the judge. "Keep me, my precious!" she exclaimed. "Keep me, my dear! this is poleetical, ye must never ask me anything poleetical. Your father is a great man, my dear, and it's no for you or me to be judging him!" "Mrs. Weir's philosophy of life was summed in one expression—tenderness. In her view of the universe, which was all lighted up with a glow out of the doors of hell, good people must walk there in a kind of ecstasy of tenderness. The beasts and plants had no souls; they were here but for a day, and let their day pass gently! And as for the immortal men, on what black, downward path were many of them wending, and to what a horror of an immortality!" "She was a dwaibly body from the first," said Hermiston when he heard of her death. "Puir bitch," said he, "puir bitch!" when he looked on her dead. Stevenson has at last made a real living woman, and this is she. There are champions, I know, of Barbara Grant and of Catriona; there will be perhaps many to admire the old Kirsty and the young. But I think his one success with womankind is the "tender, tearful, incompetent" wife of the Hanging Judge. There is a notable description of a girl tossing about in the first stage of the malady of love; but I do not think the love-story here, as a whole, gives Stevenson a claim to be ranked with those who can create one with particular force and distinction. The austere young man entering, by love, the dark valley which you feel will close about him soon, holds your thoughts, but not the girl; the background of grey hills, huddling "one behind another like a herd of cattle into the sunset," are more real than the beauties and coquetries of the maiden. The fact is, the maiden, for all he tries to deck her prettily, is only an instrument of fate in Stevenson's hands. His heart is with her lover, faring to his destiny in that field of the hills.

Mr. Colvin in a full editorial note gives what is known of Stevenson's intentions about the end of the story. That he would have got over the difficulty which stood in the way of the Hanging Judge passing, or at least consenting to, the sentence of death on his only son for the murder of his sweetheart's seducer, is certain. I think that and the death of Hermiston are the only facts I want to know. Many plans must run through a story-teller's mind before he resolves on the inevitable end, which indeed he may struggle against. The rescue of Archie by the four Elliots would have been a great incident; baldly suggested, his escape to America with the girl who had allowed herself to be seduced in revenge for wounded vanity, suggests nothing pleasing and nothing inevitable. But I am convinced, from the masterly air about the whole progress of the story as we know it, that Stevenson would not have failed. The curtain must fall for us now at the death of the Stoic father, that monster of brute force and paragon of justice. If there is evidence that the author played with the idea of a comfortable ending, he did not finish the story; and why should we, in a manner that seems to be at variance with the purpose and the temper of the previous events and circumstances? But this whole matter, and other things of interest too, are carefully discussed in Mr. Colvin's note.

Stevenson has laid the scene of the story at the beginning of the present century, his editor rightly pointing out that some of the incidents have even an earlier look. He has been less careful here than usual in keeping to the accent of speech in vogue at the period; but only in one case does he strike a discordant note. Said Glenalmond to Archie, concerning some expressions the boy had used towards his father, "They are merely literary and decorative." Young Mr. Stevenson might have had these words addressed to him, say by Professor Fleeming Jenkin, but not young Weir by an Edinburgh lawyer of well-nigh a century ago. The minutest searching, however, would hardly find another such slip in a book which is a marvel for the sustained dignity, the succinct force, and the austere beauty of its style.

"here afar,
Intent on my own race and place, I wrote,"

he says, in the dedication to his wife. And Scotland is actually in this book. A Scottish critic may be at least

of some use by assuring Southerners of that. Many things labelled Scottish are passed off on them to-day in which there is nothing more broadly or deeply national than some screeds of uncouth dialect. But all Lowland Scotland is suggested in the four Elliott brothers, the respectable laird, the religious enthusiast, the shrewd worldling, and the little reputable poet, with a reckless Border raider underneath each one of them. The combination of intellectual austerity and force with barbaric manners and morals in the Justice Clerk is essentially Scottish, one may as well confess. "The cold huddle of grey hills" rises up before you as you read this grim story of the strife of irreconcilable mortals. The cold sky is over your head, the moorland winds whistle in your ears, and the cruel sleet stings your cheek. Not a very amiable land, nor an altogether agreeable people, but with such a proven power of drawing exiles' hearts that their best painters have not deigned to soften a trait or explain an asperity. A. M.

A PICTURE OF CHILDHOOD.*

We may borrow, to describe the glimpses of child life which this little volume opens to us, the author's account of the bubbles which its heroine and her father send up from their garden together. "The colours of all the gems in the world run molten through their fragile films. And what visions they contain for crystal gazers! Among the gold and the green, the rose and blue, you see the dwarfed reflection of your own trees and your own home floating up into the sunshine. These are your surroundings—so lovely, so fairy-like in the bubble, in reality so prosaic, so inadequate. To W. V. the bubbles are full of strange continents and new discoveries" (p. 38). These sketches have the lightness, the opalescent hues, the miniature reflections of the soap bubbles, and like them may yield to an unskilful touch nothing but a drop of soapy water, but we may safely say of one who finds nothing more in them, that he lacks apprehension of the most catholic interest of humanity. No one is wholly lacking in tenderness for childhood, but prevalence in life is danger in art; triteness dogs all broad human emotion, and the loves that we have felt most deeply are just those which it is most difficult for literature to recall to us, because it recalls also so much heavy-handed attempt at expression. Mr. Canton performs this difficult task; he pilots us to "childhood's Atlantis" past the widespread shoals of dulness and the terrible reefs of affectation, he keeps us at our goal but for a moment—too short a moment—but how few can take us there at all!

The booklet has an even deeper attraction, or perhaps we should rather say that wherever we can say so much as this we can say more. If we have only lived long enough in this world we can probably reckon in our acquaintance more than one prosaic and commonplace personage whom we can pursue backwards into a time when only to feel the little hand slipped in ours was to be led into fairyland, and we are aware that the change which has transformed a darling to an object of tepid goodwill is the result of no tragic mutilation, but of a mere change in his stage of growth and our point of view. Perhaps the commonplace man was a commonplace child, or perhaps after all he is not such a commonplace man now if we could really get at him, perhaps in truth there is no such thing as a commonplace human being. But then arises the question, What is it in childhood which robs the commonplace of its blinding influence? We find in this little book some hint of an answer to this vast problem. That echo of parental love which a little child evokes in every heart witnesses to the principle that not even the most perfect response satisfies the human craving for sympathy as completely as that absolute lack of response, emancipating us from the need of it, which springs from the weakness of a child. The helplessness without, revealing unsuspected depths of disinterestedness within, also quickens the aspirations that turn towards the Above, and enables the father on earth to rise into a new sympathy with the Father in Heaven. And we have never felt more than in reading some verses in this tiny volume that if the mutual love of man to woman, with its righteous and in-

* "W. V., Her Book, and Various Verses." By William Canton, Author of "The Invisible Playmate." (Isbister.)

defeasible claim, reveals what is most characteristic of humanity, it is the unmuted, unclaiming love of man to child which brings us nearest to what we may conceive of God.

We must not bid farewell to the little creation without vindicating our critical acumen, and will therefore note a certain lack of homogeneity which tells unfavourably in anything so slight. We would have withdrawn one or two of the verses, for different reasons, one of which is, we declare boldly, that we do not understand their meaning. Can the author not give us another edition with more details of W. V.'s birthdays and bedtime, space being provided by an Index Expurgatorius of the verse? There is also a certain awkwardness in having to refer to a young lady whom we would associate with Scott's little Marjory Fleming (to suggest her nearest imaginative kinswoman) by the indistinct and unchildlike appellation of initials. But nothing is indistinct about W. V. save her name. How much reality there is in the sketch we are not informed, and perhaps it is a part of its charm that it invites the reader's co-operation, allowing him at pleasure to expand W. V. (as little H. C. in Wordsworth's loveliest lines) into some actual child life, or keep the letters for fairyland.

JULIA WEDGWOOD.

THE UNION OF SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND.*

In the Union of 1707 Mr. Mackinnon has found a text on which to discourse through five hundred and twenty-four goodly octavo pages. Ample as his discourse is, there is hardly a paragraph that the general reader would willingly see excised. The lengthened narrative is seldom tame, and never tedious. Whether describing the events which led up to the Union, or the international jealousies, or the various political parties, or the heated Parliamentary discussions, or the excitement of the street mobs, or the dissatisfaction with the completed Union, or the attempts—constitutional and forcible—to dissolve it, Mr. Mackinnon ever writes with a facile pen, wide knowledge, and an unprejudiced mind. Though a patriotic Scot, he is singularly free from bitterness, even when dealing with the unworthy and unconstitutional legislation of the House of Commons after the Union. Of the Union itself, Mr. Mackinnon does not believe that it was effected by bribing the Scottish representatives; nor does he believe that the subsequent prosperity of Scotland is entirely due to it. He holds, indeed, that prosperity was for a time retarded in Scotland by the selfishness and narrow-mindedness of the English majority in Parliament; and that the tide only began to flow steadily after the '45. Looking back, he seems to think that a federal might have proved better than an incorporating Union; and, looking forward, he would not be sorry to see the re-establishment of a Scottish Parliament for dealing with purely national questions.

Like too many books of the present day, Mr. Mackinnon's shows traces of haste and carelessness. Occasionally, the meaning is somewhat obscured by his use of pronouns; and occasionally such a sentence as this may be stumbled on: "The result of this miserable practice was to reduce the oppressed farmer, who could find no redress in the baron courts, in which his oppressor was both judge and defendant, to bankruptcy and beggary." It must be noted, too, that the quotations within inverted commas are not always immaculate; nor are the minute statements always absolutely accurate. The Commission on the Massacre of Glencoe was appointed on the 29th of April—not in June—1693. The Scottish Parliament did not offer a premium in 1696 on imported victual. It only approved, on the 9th of October, an Act of Privy Council, which had promised a premium on victual imported before the first of that month. The inhabitants of Bo'ness did not lament in their petition that the number of ships belonging to their port was reduced. Sometimes an interesting point is missed, as, for example, in the sequel of the Edinburgh riot in the summer of 1700. "A judicial inquiry," says Mr. Mackinnon, "subsequently resulted in

the arrest and conviction of several of the ring-leaders, who were sentenced to be publicly scourged and sent into banishment. The ceremony of scourging was carried out in the mildest fashion, under the eye of the vast crowd, which assembled to honour the prisoners with an ovation. The magistrates resented the clemency of their all too merciful hangman, and sent for his colleague of Haddington to repeat the operation more vigorously. This hapless functionary quailed in turn before the menaces of the crowd, and the solemn function took a ludicrous end in the flight of the obnoxious executioner, amid the jeers of his tormentors." This statement need not be examined in all its details. It is enough to point out that, instead of resorting to the extraordinary expedient of re-inflicting a penalty which had been nominally endured, the magistrates brought the hangman of Haddington to scourge his professional brother of the metropolis for undue leniency. In his chapter on "the final struggle (1706-1707)," Mr. Mackinnon makes a slip of an opposite kind. "Defoe," he says, "records that he himself narrowly escaped having his head broken by a stone thrown at him, while looking down on the disorderly scene in the High Street." But Defoe, who was not the man to minimise such an incident, does not say that he had a narrow escape. His own words are: "The author of this had one great stone thrown at him, for but looking out of a window; for they suffered no body to look out, especially with any lights, lest they should know faces, and inform against them afterwards."

Such minor blemishes do not, however, affect the substantial value of Mr. Mackinnon's work. When he has given so much information concerning his important theme, and dealt so fully and freshly with the stirring times relating to it, perhaps it is a little ungracious to hint that he might have devoted one paragraph at least to the constitution and forms of procedure of the Scottish Parliament; that he might have printed the Treaty of Union as an appendix; and that, in justice to himself, he ought to have supplied an index.

D. HAY FLEMING.

ADVENTURES IN CRITICISM.*

Mr. Quiller-Couch has gathered into a volume of convenient size a selection of his critical papers contributed week by week to the *Speaker*.

The dates of publication are given, but the studies are arranged in chronological order of writers dealt with, and in the space of 400 pages or so we survey a fairly wide extent of English literature. Starting with Chaucer and Shakespeare, Defoe and Sterne, we soon pass on to contemporary writers such as Mr. John Davidson, Mr. Hall Caine, Mr. Anthony Hope, and the author of "Trilby," and can admire Mr. Quiller-Couch's sympathy with and appreciation of varied types of prose and poetry. The adventures are mainly among poets and novelists, or subjects closely connected with the arts of poetry and fiction, such as "The Popular Conception of a Poet," "Selection," and "Externals," and "Q." comes well out of his various encounters. In the few words of introduction he apologizes for the fragmentary character of the papers, and hopes that they "may be worth a second reading," and here and there perhaps "suggest the outline of a first principle." They are certainly very pleasant reading, and worth preserving, though they are not likely to have the permanence of his best work in fiction. There is, of course, considering the limits in which these studies first appeared, no attempt at any very exhaustive criticism of any of the writers dealt with, no diving into the depths, nor especially subtle or detailed treatment. They are rather literary talks, aiming at reviving or increasing interest in some favourite author, throwing out a suggestion for the settlement of some disputed point, or treating appreciatively a new book by some contemporary writer. We feel very soon on most friendly terms with our guide, and enjoy the frequent glimpses of his own personality, and his various likes and dislikes. Mr. Quiller-Couch has many valuable qualifications for the post of critic, notably his independent judgment, kindness, fairness, and moderation.

* "The Union of England and Scotland: a Study of International History." By James Mackinnon, Ph.D. (London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1896.)

* "Adventures in Criticism." By A. T. Quiller-Couch. (Cassell.)