

ingenuous air with his public, which goes far to heighten the impression that his very clever art is very original as well. It is not, however; but is deeply tinged with the very obvious tendency among American novel writers of to-day—and yesterday, and probably to-morrow—to write as mere cynical spectators of huge social ironies. This attitude is growing more and more popular, especially with the younger novelists, and is better perhaps, than the tiresome self-consciousness we are apt to find among them. Cynicism may, of course, be the most offensive kind of self-consciousness, but thus far we have not seen it in this character among the brilliant young fellows who have used it as a flavour to the various phases of American social life they have portrayed.

"KLAUS BEWER'S WIFE," is a translation from the German of Paul Lindau, by Clara S. Fleishman. [New York: Henry Holt and Company.] It is an exceedingly flat story of a young German, who marries an operadancer because she is pretty, and shortly repents because she is not wise. We should sympathise with Herr Bewer somewhere toward the end of the book, but we find it impossible, with an instinctive feeling that he is much too stolid to appreciate any such mental demonstration on our part. We should be righteously indignant with his foolish, common little wife, but we are conscious only of a strong disgust for her, and resentment at being obliged to accept her as the chief personage of a story, for the existence of which, apart from its descriptions of the seamy side of German theatrical life, it is difficult to find an excuse.

"IN THE CLOUDS."*

THE completion of "Charles Egbert Craddock's" latest story in the pages of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and its republication in book form, affords us opportunity to again speak of Miss Murfree's remarkable literary work—work which is, in our opinion, without doubt the best of its kind that has been produced of late.

"In the Clouds" is the most important book Miss Murfree has yet written: it is decidedly a flight above the level reached by the "Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains;" it takes a larger range than that story; and if we mistake not, it gives fair promise of higher altitudes in literature yet to be reached by its gifted author.

In it Miss Murfree's genius still plays about the Tennessee Mountains, and we meet again in the chief characters some with whom we are already familiar; but we do the like in the novels of Thackeray, who only re-introduced the same personages continually, instead of re-christening them; and with respect to the objection of repetition, or parallelism, here and there, urged against our author, we may observe, that in all her books, so far, Miss Murfree has been treating mainly of one phase of life and one aspect of nature—the life of mountaineer folk in Tennessee; a type and scene which, because she is in such appreciative sympathy with both, have afforded such free scope to her splendid literary faculty that one cannot wonder that she continues to linger about what must, in the nature of things, be as dear to her as it is familiar.

We have no misgiving as to Miss Murfree's future on this account. Seeing the character of her work in the field she has traversed, we confidently expect no inferior in any other she may try: if she should transfer her observation, for instance, to a great city, and the human lives led there, her genius would illumine the subject as it does Tennessee mountain life—not sink into the vulgar commonplaces of some noted American novelists, who, on the other hand, transferred to the Tennessee Mountains, would probably be commonplace still, if they could find anything whatever to write about in the absence of the fashionable millinery and woman's gear that constitutes their chief inspiration.

Turning now to the book under notice, we remark in the first place on the extraordinary vividness of the impression the author manages to convey by the use of apt terms—the best word put in the best place. Her literary style is so good that the scene she designs to picture is outlined clearly as we go on and then filled in complete at the proper moment with one deft touch. Her poetic imagery, too, is of the best:

Pensive intimations there were in its reduced splendours; in the deep purple of Chilhowee, in the brown tints of the nearer ranges. Something was gone from the earth—a day—and the earth was sad, though it had known so many. And the night impended, and the unimagined morrow. And thus the averted future turns by slow degrees the face that all flesh dreads to see. The voice of lowing cattle came up from the cove. The fires in the solitudes burned apace.

And, again, of the massive peak of Thunderhead:

Kindred thunderheads of the air lift above the horizon, lure, loiter,

lean on its shoulder with similitudes and contrasts. Then with all the buoyant liberties of cloudage they rise—rise!

Alas! the earth clasps its knees; the mountains twine their arms about it; hoarded ores of specious values weigh it down. It cannot soar! Only the cumbrous image of an ethereal thing! Only the ineffective wish vainly fashioned like the winged aspiration. . . . Sometimes it was purple against the azure heavens; or gray and sharp of outline on faint green spaces of the sky; or misty, immaterial, beset with clouds, as if the clans had gathered to claim the changeling.

The mountain dialect, too, though, or perhaps because, it has a melancholy sound, is instinct also with pathos' twin sister, humour—cropping out in terse witticisms that serve admirably to set off these rough sons of Adam and daughters of Eve against the gloom and solemnity of their mountain solitudes. The author's humour, indeed, is of a fine sort, as witness this:

His head was frankly red. His freckles stood out plainly for all they were worth; and, regarded as freckles, they were of striking value. . . . A half-grown Shanghai pullet was pecking about the big, flat stones of the hearth in a premature and unprescient proximity to the pot.

Miss Murfree has a very effective yet pleasant method of moralising through the mouths of her characters—a habit which, in other hands, might easily become tiresome, but which is used by her so skilfully that without the moral or reflection the passage would often be felt to be incomplete, or the picture at all events not so vivid.

If the author excels in anything, where all is excellent, it is in the description of natural scenery, especially of the mountains. Thus, in the opening chapter:

The nearest [mountains] were all tinged with a dusky purple, except for the occasional bare, garnet-coloured stretches of the "fire-scalds," relics of the desolation when the woods were burned; the varying tints were sublimated to a blue in the distance; then through every charmed gradation of ethereal azure the ranges faded into the invisible spaces that we wot not of. There was something strangely overwhelming in the stupendous expanse of the landscape. It abashed the wildest liberties of fancy. Somehow it disconcerted all past experience, all previous prejudice, all credence in other conditions of life. The fact was visibly presented to the eye that the world is made of mountains. . . . He glanced over her shoulder at the rugged horizontal line of Chilhowee, rising high above the intervening mountains, and sharply imposed upon the mosaic of delicate tints known as the Valley of the Tennessee. . . . Once a sudden elusive silver glinting, imperceptible to eyes less trained to the minutiae of these long distances, told him the secret source of some stream, unexplored to its head waters, in a dark and braky ravine. Sometime he distinguished a stump, which he had never seen before, or a collection of dead trees, girdled long ago, and standing among the corn upon so high and steep a slope that the slant justified the descriptive jibe of the region, "fields hung up to dry."

In her determination to fit the word to the thought, Miss Murfree has sometimes the appearance of being a little pedantic; but this, we think, may be excused, for we would not have such thoughts diluted in commonplace. She has a wondrously beautiful, strong, and noble vocabulary: a "Craddock Anthology," selected from this volume alone, would be of no mean dimensions.

"This apostate cloud" [the mountain before referred to], "a hardy flower will turn a smiling face responsive to the measured patronage of the chilly sunshine in this rare air," "a freshened realisation of despair," "a slatternly ill-adjusted look," "her sedulous conscience," "the anxiety of forecast blunting the actual pain of experience," "he rubbed his corrugated brow as vigorously as if he could thus smooth out the pucker in his brain." "In these solemn spaces Silence herself walked unshod," "Alethea, whose voice was the slogan of duty," "a fox, a swift-scudding tawny streak, sped across it as she looked."

These are culled from the first three chapters only; every page throughout the thirty the book contains is gemmed with felicitous phrases and expressions, the scenes are painted with epithets. And what could be richer in fancy than this:

Fine sport they [the winds] had often had, those riotous mountain spirits, shrieking down the chimney to affright the loneliness; then falling to sobs and sighs to mock the voices of those who had known sorrow here, and perhaps shed tears; sometimes wrapping themselves in snow as in a garment, and reeling in fantastic whirls through the forlorn and empty place, sometimes twitting the quaint timbers with their infirmities, and one wild night wrenching off half a dozen clapboards from the roof and scattering them about the door. Thus the moon might look in, seeing no more those whose eyes had once met her beam, and even the sunlight had melancholy intimations when it shone on the deserted hearth-stone.

The story ends tragically, but agreeably to the rules of art. It is the story of a noble woman and a worthless feather-headed man, who simply had not capacity of soul enough to reciprocate the love lavished on him. This unrequited love of Alethea's is very beautiful: one cannot help wishing it had fallen otherwise and been more fruitful of nobleness in the object. But—

* "In the Clouds," by Charles Egbert Craddock: Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company. Toronto: Williamson and Company.