

Recent Fiction.*

WE have seldom come across so charming a book as "The Golden Age" by Kenneth Grahame. The golden age is the time of childhood and the thoughts and ideas of that age the author depicts in a delightful and masterly manner. Of the eighteen little sketches which compose the book, it is hard to single out any for special mention, they are all so excellent, but, perhaps, those which pleased us best were: "The Roman Road," and "The Finding of the Princess." It is not a children's book, though dealing with the incidents and imaginations of child-life, it is essentially a book for grown up people. Our readers should obtain it, and if they do not enjoy its delicate humour, exquisite pathos and tender fancy, we shall be disappointed in them. It is difficult to quote from the book, since each sketch is a finished whole and should be read as such, but the following may serve as a specimen. It is taken from "A White-washed Uncle":

When at last the atmosphere was clear of this depressing influence, we met despondently in the potato-cellar, all of us, that is, but Harold, who had been told off to accompany his relative to the station; and the feeling was unanimous, that, as an uncle, William could not be allowed to pass. Selina roundly declared him a beast, pointing out that he had not even got us a half-holiday; and, indeed, there seemed but little to do, but to pass sentence. We were about to put it, when Harold appeared on the scene; his red face, round eyes and mysterious demeanour hinting at awful portents. Speechless he stood a space, then, slowly drawing his hand from the pocket of his knickerbockers, he displayed on a dirty palm—one, two, three, four half crowns! We could but gaze, tranced, breathless, mute; never had any of us seen, in the aggregate, so much bullion before. Then Harold told his tale:

"I took the old fellow to the station," he said, "and as we went along I told him all about the station-master's family, and how I had seen the porter kissing our housemaid, and what a nice fellow he was, with no airs or affectation about him, and anything I thought would be of interest; but he didn't seem to pay much attention, but walked along puffing his cigar, and once I thought—I'm not certain, but I thought—I heard him say, 'Well, thank God, that's over!' When we got to the station he stopped suddenly, and said, 'Hold on a minute!' Then he shoved these into my hand in a frightened sort of way, and said, 'Look here, youngster! These are for you and the other kids. Buy what you like—make little beasts of yourselves—only don't tell the old people, mind! Now, cut away home.' So I cut."

A solemn hush fell on the assembly, broken first by small Charlotte. "I didn't know," she observed dreamily, "that there were such good men anywhere in the world. I hope he'll died to-night, for then he'll go straight to heaven!" But the repentant Selina bewailed herself with tears and sobs, refusing to be comforted; for that in her haste she had called this whit-souled relative a beast.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Edward, the master-mind, rising, as he always did, to the situation: "We'll christen the pie-bald pig after him—the one that hasn't got a name yet—and that'll show we're sorry for our mistake."

"I—I christened that pig this morning," Harold guiltily confessed, "I christened it after the curate. I'm very sorry—but he came and bowed to me last night, after you others has all been sent to bed early—and somehow I felt I had to do it!"

"Oh, but that doesn't count," said Edward hastily, "because we weren't all there. We'll take that christening off and call it Uncle William. And you can save up the curate for the next litter."

And the motion being agreed to without a division, the House went into Committee of Supply.

Undeniably powerful, but intensely disagreeable is "Celibates," by George Moore. It consists of three stories, the second of which should never have been written. All three deal with unpleasant subjects and persons, and though

we fully recognize their ability and also we regret to say their truthfulness as possible sketches of real life, we confess to have obtained little pleasure from their perusal.

"An Errant Wooing," by Mrs. Burton Harrison, is brightly and pleasantly written. There is only sufficient love story on which to hang the descriptive positions of the book. The descriptions, chiefly of scenes in North Africa and Spain are interesting enough and don't savour too much of the guide book, whilst the illustrations, which are numerous, are satisfactory.

New ground is broken by "Kafir Stories," by William Charles Scully, whose name as a writer is new to us. If this is his first book he has to be congratulated on a success—for these stories of Kafir life are of great strength and interest. "The Quest of the Copper" is worthy of Rider Haggard at his best, and anyone who wishes for horrors ought to be satisfied with "Khamba."

In the Pseudonym Library we have two new volumes. The first "Under the Chilterns" is a story of English peasant life. It is a sad little story, of poverty on the one hand and grasping meanness on the other. The writer is evidently well acquainted with the class of characters he describes—the ordinary inhabitants of an English country village. "Every Days' News," by C. E. Francis, is just as sad, though it is a story of a very different condition of life. Here we have the unhappy results of a marriage between a highly cultured gentleman and a new woman of the worst type. Both take to authorship and they are mutually disgusted with each other's productions. "Two Strangers," by Mrs. Oliphant, is a fragment rather than a story, and an unsatisfactory fragment, too, as it leaves off just at the point where it begins to be interesting. It turns on the meeting of husband and wife, who have been separated through unfortunate circumstances. We are left in doubt as to the outcome of their meeting. "A Question of Colour," by F. C. Philips, is another of these gloomy productions. Here the heartless heroine sells her true lover in order to marry a rich negro. Then she breaks her husband's heart and drives him to suicide. A rich widow, she tries to recover her former lover, but he has learned her real character and escapes.

"The Story of Christine Rochefort," by Helen Choate Prince, is well worth reading, and it is a delightful change after those we have just mentioned. The scene is laid in France in a district once historic, but now a modern industrial centre. It is a love story of the old fashioned type, though in a modern setting. Christine Rochefort is a girl of a noble family, who, to retrieve the fallen fortunes of her people, names a rich young manufacturer of the district. It is only by degrees that true affection for her husband grows in her heart, and at first she goes out of her way to show-sympathy with the Anarchistic movement among the working men, which is largely directed against him. Gradually her eyes are opened and she realizes her husband's true worth. The book is worth reading, not only as a well-told love story, but also as a picture, not unfriendly, of the unwise and misguided aspirations of the working classes. The characters are excellently drawn, especially those of the old Marquise, Christine's grandmother, the Abbé Lemaire, whose answer to the Anarchist leader at the public debate is one of the best things in the book, and the young enthusiastic Anarchist de Martel, who falls a victim to the movement he has helped to arouse.

Messrs. Macmillan & Co. are now publishing the works of Charles Kingsley monthly from the 1st July last, at 1s 6d per volume. They are issued in "Pott" 8 vo., bound in buckram, and printed from new type. "Hypatia" is the first volume of this beautiful Pocket Edition, which in printing and binding is of admirable taste and most pleasant use. As for the book itself it is too well known to need any notice. We read "Hypatia" long ago and are now tempted to read it again, so inviting-looking is this little volume. The first edition appeared in 1853 in two volumes. It was followed three years later by a single volume edition. Macmillan's first edition was published in 1863 and their second edition in 1869, of which reprints were issued nearly every year from 1872 to 1889. Their third edition (1888) has been reprinted five times. There have been other editions besides these, notably, the Eversley and Globe and the Six penny. It is not every author that has such continuous demand as this.

- * "The Golden Age." By Kenneth Grahame. Chicago: Stone & Kimball.
- "Celibates." By George Moore. New York and London: Macmillan & Co. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Company.
- "An Errant Wooing." By Mrs. Burton Harrison. New York: The Century Company.
- "Kafir Stories." By William Charles Scully. New York: Henry Holt & Company. The Buckram Series.
- "Under the Chilterns." By Rosemary. A story of English village life. Pseudonym Library. London: T. Fisher Unwin. Toronto: Copp, Clark Co.
- "Every Day's News." By C. E. Francis. Pseudonym Library. London: T. Fisher Unwin. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Company.
- "Two Strangers." By Mrs. Oliphant. Anonym Library. London: T. Fisher Unwin. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co.
- "A Question of Colour." By F. C. Philips. The Bijou Series. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company.
- "The Story of Christine Rochefort." By Helen Choate Prince. Longman's Colonial Library. London: Longman, Green & Co. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co.
- "Hypatia." By Charles Kingsley. Pocket Edition. London and New York: Macmillan & Co. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co.