

advantage which a writer thus obtains. Then she had perfectly mastered the dialect of the curious people whose lives she photographed for us, and in her hands it became flexible and poetic to a degree that must have astonished its original possessors, if they chanced to read it in print. Again, there was thrown upon the somewhat sombre, monotonous lives of her characters a sunny gleam of humour, tempered with a gentle sympathy, which could not fail of being irresistibly attractive, while an active dramatic instinct, a picturesque portrayal of character, and an admirable management of dialogue, combined to make up a *tout ensemble* that held the reader a willing and delighted captive.

And even yet the most brilliant facet of Miss Murfree's genius has not yet been indicated, to wit, her surpassing skill as a depicter of nature through the medium of words. Though finding expression in prose, her thoughts are those of the poet and artist, and the descriptions of scenery, with which all her works abound, constitute one of their chiefest charms. Here are some specimens, chosen almost at random, but sufficient to illustrate the writer's rare genius for work of this sort:

"Lost Creek sounded some broken minor chords as it dashed against the rocks in its headlong way. The wild grapes were blooming. Their fragrance, so delicate, yet so pervasive, suggested some exquisite unseen presence—the dryads surely were abroad! The beech trees stretched down their silver branches, and green shadows. Through rifts in the foliage shimmered glimpses of a vast array of sunny parallel mountains, converging and converging till they seemed to meet far away in one long level line, so ideally blue that it looked less like earth than heaven."

And again:

"Now and then the faint clangour of a cow-bell came from out the tangled woods about the little hut, and the low of homeward-bound cattle sounded upon the air, mellowed and softened by the distance. The haze that rested above the long narrow valley was hardly visible, save in the illusive beauty with which it invested the scene—the tender azure of the far-away ranges; the exquisite tones of the gray and purple shadows that hovered about the darkening coves, and along the deep lines, marking the gorges; the burnished brilliance of the sunlight, which, despite its splendour, seemed lonely enough, lying motionless upon the lonely landscape, and on the still figures clustered about the porch."

Both the above have been taken from "In the Tennessee Mountains." Here is one other from "The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains":

"The shadows were beginning to creep slowly up the slopes of the Great Smoky Mountains as if they came from the depths of the earth. A roseate suffusion idealized range and peak to the east. The delicate skyey background of opaline tints and lustre made distinct and definite their majestic symmetry of outline. Ah! and the air was so clear! What infinite lengths of elastic distances stretched between that quivering trumpet-flower by the fence, and the azure heights which its scarlet horn might almost seem to cover! The sun, its yellow blaze burned out, and now a sphere of smouldering fire, was dropping down behind Chilhowee, royally purple, richly dark. Wings were in the air, and every instinct was homeward. An eagle, with a shadow scurrying through the valley like some forlorn Icarus that might not soar, swept high over the landscape. Above all rose the great 'bald,' still splendidly illumined with the red glamour of the sunset, and holding its uncovered head so loftily against the sky that it might seem it had bared its brow before the majesty of heaven."

A regal chaplet of such gems might be quickly strung, although Miss Murfree has so far given the world but four volumes. Nature, indeed, has but rarely so poetically sensitive, or so eloquent an interpreter.

The same year that the stories of the Tennessee Mountains issued from the Riverside Press, the Ticknors published "Where the Battle Was Fought," which is, so far as bulk goes, much the most considerable of Miss Murfree's works. It is a novel. The scene is laid in Tennessee, but not among the mountains, and the people are of the conventional kind. The construction of the story is essentially conventional too. There is an impulsive hero, a lovely heroine, a very designing villain, a heavy father, and the usual proportion of secondaries and supernumeraries. Nevertheless it is a very strong and original piece of work, and intensely interesting, albeit its almost uniformly sombre atmosphere, for the shadow of the great war lies heavily upon it. Marcia Wayne presents a very attractive type of womanhood, and one gets to admire her so warmly as almost to wish her better luck than marrying Estwicke, even if dramatic consistency does demand it. General Wayne is clearly a study from life, and no doubt a very accurate one too. Brennett, the villain, is remarkably well drawn. But with all its good qualities, the relative merits of the book, as compared with the Tennessee Mountain stories, are very clearly shown by the fact that, although published in the same year, the latter has reached the sixteenth edition while the former is only in its sixth.

Miss Murfree's second novel, "The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains," formed a leading attraction in the *Atlantic Monthly* during 1885, before coming out in book form. As the title implies, the writer is in her own field again, and, as a natural consequence, her work is of the deepest interest. Very much of what has been already said with reference to "In the Tennessee Mountains," applies with equal appropriateness to the "Prophet," and need not be rehearsed. The same remark holds good also for "Down the Ravine," a serial story which, after running its course in *Wide Awake* was republished by Houghton, Mifflin, and Co.

As a novel, the story of "The Prophet," it must be confessed, is not entirely satisfactory, despite its picturesque realism. The characters remain to the end elemental forces vaguely clad in the garb of humanity. They are true to nature so far as they go; but for the novel they do not go far enough. They move and have their being in the transforming power of romance. Notwithstanding this, they take fast hold upon our imaginations, and seem

real enough so long as we linger in the aerial precincts of the Great Smokies. It is only when we close the book and come down to the level of every-day life that we realize how near they are to being little more than abstract conceptions.

Miss Murfree's latest work, "In the Clouds," which is at present the chief serial of the *Atlantic*, promises better in this respect. The characters stand out more distinctly from their mystic environment, and seem to have more flesh and blood about them. But of course it is still too early to pass judgment upon the whole story.

After a careful reading of what Miss Murfree has put forth, one cannot, however, help being struck with the fact that she is guilty of repetition and parallelism to a degree that arouses some apprehension as to her future. Take for instance Cynthia Ware and her mother in "Drifting Down Lost Creek," and Alethea Sayles and her mother in "In the Clouds," as we come upon them talking together, with the young girl's lover in each case as the subject of their conversation. The heroines differ but slightly in personal appearance, for, although Cynthia's hair is "auburn, of a brilliant rich tint," and Alethea's "yellow, with a soft sheen," the eyes of the former are "luminous brown," and those of the latter "bright hazel," which is but another way of stating the same thing, while they are both so fair and refined of face, and graceful of form, as to seem strangely inconsistent with the stolid unloveliness of their mothers, and their rude mountaineer surroundings. The mothers, too, resemble one another so strongly in their physical and mental characteristics that the same model must surely have served for both.

Again, in the complication of their humble love-dramas, a clear kinship may be easily established between Dorinda Cayce, the high-souled heroine of "The Prophet," and Alethea Sayles of "In the Clouds." Both maidens have, with the pathetic perversity of womankind, bestowed the prize of their affections upon utterly unworthy objects, while in each case a suitor, altogether appropriate and meritorious, stands ready to kiss the very hem of their linsey-woolsey gowns. Rick Tyler and Reuben Lorey, *alias* the "Mink," may not be otherwise alike than in their manifest inferiority to the women whose hearts they have won, but Amos James and Ben Doaks are akin in more than their common experience of the sorest disappointment that ever falls to the lot of man. They are both sure, solid, worthy men, who would, undoubtedly, have made the women of their choice most excellent husbands, even if such a disposition of the heroines might perchance have commended itself more favourably to our sense of practicality than of romance. And in that most touching and beautiful of all the Tennessee Mountain series, "The Harnt that Walks Chilhowee," it is impossible to resist the current of sympathy which sets so strongly in favour of Simon Burney, as opposed to Tom Pratt, in the contest for Clarissa Giles's hand, for much the same reason as makes us partisans of James and Doaks.

The most striking case of parallelism, however, is that which can be made out between the story of "Drifting Down Lost Creek," and the two novels of "The Prophet" and "In the Clouds," the central point of interest in all three turning upon precisely the same thing—to wit, the tribulations endured by the hero because of his being undeservedly suspected of having committed a murder.

This is somewhat unfortunate, to be sure, and so too is the pedantic tendency which tempts Miss Murfree into sending her readers off for Webster, bewildered by such phrases as "sub-acutely amazed," "rayonnant circle," "luculent enchantment," and "sequelae of an accusing conscience;" but these are, after all, very slight spots upon an otherwise splendid constellation.

There is much more which seems necessary to be said about Charles Egbert Craddock, but for considerations of space, I must content myself with unreservedly commending her works to every reader who desires to keep pace with what is purest and best in the literature of our sister nation.

J. MACDONALD OXLEY.

Ottawa.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE BRANT CELEBRATION.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—I beg to suggest that, as a memento of the unveiling of the Brant statue, what could be more acceptable to the Canadian people than a good, tasteful edition of Miss E. Pauline Johnson's poems? From THE WEEK alone could be selected sufficient to make a handsome volume, and there is no question of how welcome the collection would be.

A preface might be added by Mr. W. D. Howells (Miss Johnson's cousin), for instance, or Principal Grant of Queen's University.

Trusting that the suggestion will, sooner or later, and in some way or other, be carried out, I remain, yours very truly,

Richmond, Que.

J. C. SUTHERLAND.

THE Duke of Wellington told the following story, in his own characteristic language, to Sir F. H. Doyle's father, when dining at Apsley House: "After the battle of Talavera I wanted the Spanish force to make a movement, and called upon Cuesta to take the necessary steps, but he demurred. He said, by way of answer, 'For the honour of the Spanish Crown, I cannot attend to the directions of the British General, unless that British General go upon his knees and entreat me to follow his advice.' Now, I wanted the thing done, while as to going down upon my knees I did not care a twopenny d—n, so down I plumped."