

SOME NOTES ON POETRY FOR CHILDREN.

(Continued from November.)

I CANNOT find anywhere else such intimate treatment of this side of child life.¹ In Lady Lindsay's "String of Beads" there is a little poem called "A Child's Dream," which takes us part of the way, and which, there can be little doubt, was inspired by Mr. Stevenson's book. Indeed he has had many imitators, but none of them have succeeded in capturing anything but the form. And among other writers of verse, who preceded him, or have made no conscious attempts to work on similar lines, none impresses and convinces as he.

Taking them altogether, the poets have not shown themselves to be closely in touch with children; the great ones have tried and failed, and left it to humbler singers—such as Mary Lamb—to give us the true note. But these humble singers are few and far between, as the editor of the adult volume will quickly discover. We might cite Mrs. Piatt as one example of an author who, with a wide, comprehending love for children, has captured in a hundred efforts little of the genius of childhood. Perhaps in all her poems nothing is so characteristic and illuminating as the triumphal boast, in "Child's World Ballads," of the little girl who had visited Edinburgh:

I put my hand on every chair
That said "Don't touch," at Holyrood.

Another good example of an author who wished to produce sympathetic child-poems, but has always broken down, is Mr. Bret Harte. The "Miss Edith" poems are failures, and though he certainly was visited by in-

¹ There is a little poem in Mrs. Woods' recent volume, "Aeromancy," of much the same character.

spiration when he began "On the Landing," the mood passed before the piece was completed. Two little boys, Bobby, aged three and a half, and Johnny, a year older, are peeping over the balusters at night when they ought to be in bed, watching the guests on the floor below. Here are the best lines:—

BOBBY.

"Do you know why they've put us in that
back room,
Up in the attic, close against the sky,
And made believe our nursery's a cloak
room?"

Do you know why?"

JOHNNY.

"No more I don't, nor why that Sammy's
mother,
That ma thinks horrid, 'cause he bunged my
eye,
Eats an ice-cream down there like any other.
No more don't I!"

BOBBY.

"Do you know why nurse says it isn't
manners
For you and me to ask folks twice for pie,
And no one hits that man with two bananas?
Do you know why?"

JOHNNY.

"No more I don't, nor why that girl, whose
dress is
Off of her shoulders, don't catch cold and die,
When you and me gets croup when we un-
dresses!"

No more don't I!"

BOBBY.

"Perhaps she ain't as good as you and I is,
And God don't want her up there in the sky,
And lets her live—to come in just when
pie is—

Perhaps that's why,"

JOHNNY.

"Do you know why that man that's got a
cropped head,
Rubbed it just now as if he felt a fly?
Could it be, Bobby, something that I
dropped?"

And is that why?"