

AMONG OUR BOOKS.



"THESE short days," sighs the man of action as four o'clock brings gloaming and five o'clock brings darkness.

"These long nights!" exults the dreamer, as the shadows of the early winter evening drop down, and he betakes himself to his beloved books, with happy consciousness of the hours that are his.

Firelight, the shaded lamp, the easy chair, the new book playing a pretty tangle with its uncut pages, the clock ticking its gleeful plenitude of seconds, and the outside darkness softly enveloping all:—Ah, the dreamers have the best of it, after all.

"The Bookman" quotes two or three charming little poems from the volume entitled "A Quiet Road" by Lizette Woodworth Reese. Isn't this delightful?

Love came back at fall o' dew,
Playing his old part,
But I had a word or two
That would break his heart.

"He who comes at candle light
That should come before,
Must betake him to the night
From a barred door."

This the word that made us part
In the fall o' dew;
This the word that brake his heart
Yet it brake mine too!

And what about this lovely little song,

TRUST

I am Thy grass, O Lord!
I grow up sweet and tall
But for a day, beneath Thy sword
To lie at evenfall.

Yet have I not enough
In that brief day of mine!
The wind, the bees, the wholesome stuff
The sun pours out like wine.

Behold; this is my crown;
Love will not let me be;
Love holds me here, Love cuts me down
And it is well with me.

Lord, Love, keep it but so,
Thy purpose is full plain;
I die that after I may grow
As tall and sweet again.

It sings itself, sweet and soft as the rustle of a breeze swept summer field. Is it not a glorious gift, to thus reveal the glory of the common things?

Turning to prose, we open a book that is truly sublime in its revelation of tender love—the sacred love on earth, that of mother and son for each other.

In "Margaret Ogilvy, by her son, J. M. Barrie," the author has given us an insight into his early home life from which we almost turn away in reverence—so full it is of the sacred mystery of family love—that tense heart strung affection which exist no where more strongly than in Scotland—and which is as much a passion of pain as of joy to those who possess, or rather are possessed by it.

"The affection existing in a Scotch family is almost painful in its intensity," says the author "they have not more to give than their neighbors, but it is bestowed upon a few instead of being distributed among many; they are reputed niggardly, but for family affection at heart, they pay in gold."

It is not possible to write of this little book from a purely critical standpoint—it would be dipping one's steel pen point in the crimson running tide of an open vein. All we can do is to turn from page to page with a smile that comes from too deep a source to be merry, wondering just what we shall quote; eager to quote it all, and glad that "Margaret Ogilvy" is a little volume, and therefore in cost within the reach of every woman who loves her son, and every man who adores the memory of his mother.

Since J. M. Barrie is the author, there is no need to discuss the literary style of the book. He who has written "A Window in Thrums" is not likely to fail in fine touch in such a volume as this, while the creator of "Jess" is not going to fail in depicting her prototype—his own mother, for as he writes in that exquisite chapter "My Heroine."

When it was known that I had begun another story, my mother might ask what it was going to be about this time.

"Fine we can guess who it is about," my sister would say pointedly.

"Maybe you can guess, but it's beyond me," says my mother meekly.

"What woman is in all his book?" my sister would demand.

"I'm sure I cannot say," replies my mother determinedly.

"Mother, I wonder you can be so audacious! Fine you know what woman I mean. * * * I won't give you the satisfaction of saying her name. But this I will say, it is high time he was keeping her out of his books."

And then, as usual, my mother would give herself away unconsciously.

"That is what I tell him," she says, chuckling, "and he tries to keep me out, but he canna; it's more than he can do."

And in tender little passages-at-arms, mother and son, dispute the point, the latter owning, at last, that Margaret Ogilvy, Jess, Babbie, are all the loved mother, the real Margaret, the one woman to her author-son. And in the light of this beautiful memoir, we know that little Grizel in "Sentimental Tommy"—Mr. Barrie's latest novel—is also a shadow memory of this same beloved mother.

Very beautifully, this gifted writer tells the life story of this his mother-love. In the opening chapter, "How My Mother Got Her Soft Face," he tells of his own birth, and an event almost equal momentous.

On the day I was born, we bought six hair-bottomed chairs, and in our house it was an event, the first great victory in a woman's long campaign; how they had been labored for, what anxiety there was about the purchase, the show they made in possession of the west room, my father's unnatural coolness when he brought them in (but his face was white). I so often heard the tale afterward, that the coming of the chairs seems to be something I remember, as if I had jumped out of bed on that first day, and run down to see how they looked. I am sure my mother's feet were tottering to be long before they could be trusted, and that the moment after she was left alone with me, she was discovered barefooted in the west room, doctoring a scar (which she had been the first to detect) on one of the chairs, or sitting on them regally or withdrawing and re-opening the door suddenly to take the six by surprise.

When six years old, Mr. Barrie lost an elder brother, a lad of thirteen, and his mother's grief, and his own childish efforts to "make her laugh," her cherishment of his "christening robe," and her frailty after years are told with inimitable simplicity.

That is how she got her soft face, and pathetic ways, and her large charity, and why the mothers ran to her

when they had lost a child. * * * Why the tears came to lie on the mute blue eyes in which I have read all I know, and would ever care to write. For when you looked into my mother's eyes you knew, as if He had told you, when God sent her into the world—it was to open the minds of all who looked to beautiful thoughts. And that is the beginning and end of literature. Those eyes * * * have guided me through life, and I pray God they may remain my only earthly judge to the last.

In the chapter "What She Had Been," beautifully and strangely pathetic is the picture drawn by him of the girlhood of this Scottish peasant woman, her early struggles with ever-impending poverty, and the cares and responsibilities thrown all too soon upon her shoulders.

She told me everything, and so my memories of the little red town are colored by hers. * * * I cannot picture the place without seeing her as a little girl, come to the door of a certain house and beat her back against the gable-end. Or there is a wedding to-night, and the carriage with the white-eared horse is sent for a maiden in pale blue, whose bonnet-strings tie beneath the chin.

One of the choicest chapters—if indeed we may discriminate at all—is that bearing for title those magic letters, "R.L.S.," in which Mr. Barrie voices his warm admiration and pays delightful tribute to Robert Louis Stevenson, through the amusing narrative of his mother's altogether motherly jealousy.

These familiar initials are, I suppose, the best beloved in recent literature, certainly they are the sweetest to me, but there was a time when my mother could not abide them. She said, "That Stevenson man," with a sneer, and it was never easy to her to sneer, and she would knit her lips and fold her arms, and reply with a stiff "Oh," if you mentioned his aggravating name. * * * He knew her opinion of him, and would write, "My ears tingled yesterday! I said doubt she has been miscalling me again." But the more she miscalled him, the more he delighted in her, and she was informed of this, and at once said, "The scoundrel!"

If you would know what was his unpardonable crime, it was this, he wrote better books than mine. * * * For weeks, if not for months, she adhered to her determination not to read him, though I * * * was taking a pleasure, almost malicious, in putting "The Master of Ballantrae" in her way. * * * At last I got her, though I forget by which of many contrivances.

What I vividly recall is a key-hole view, to which another member of the family invited me. Then I saw my mother wrapped up in "The Master of Ballantrae" and muttering the music to herself, nodding her head in approval and taking a stealthy glance at the foot of each page before she began at the top.

One longs to include in the quotation the pretty hide-and-seek game of thought between mother and son, which continues throughout the chapter. But the few closing words we must have.

Vailima (Mr. Stevenson's Samoan home) was the one spot on earth I had any craving to visit, but I think she always knew I would never leave her. Sometimes she said she should like me to go, but not until she was laid away. * * * No, I never thought of going, was never absent for a day from her without reluctance, and never walked so quickly as when going back. In the meantime that happened which put an end forever to my volume of travel. I shall never go up the Road of Loving Hearts now on a "a wonderful clear night of stars," to meet the man coming toward me on a horse. It is still a wonderful clear night of stars, but the road is empty. So I never saw the dear king of us all.

So we read on to the tragic yet beautiful close of Margaret Ogilvy's earth life—tragic inasmuch as the daughter, who loved her best, died but three days before her, and was buried with her.

"She said good-bye to them all, and at last turned her face where her best beloved had lain, and for over an hour she prayed. * * * I think God was smiling when He took her to Him, as He had so often smiled at her during all those seventy-six years.

It is a memorial beyond all marbles—this lovely record of a simple woman-life, a Scotch motherhood. The gifted son has made his mother immortal.

REVIEWER.

"Margaret Ogilvy," by her son, J. M. Barrie. Scribner Sons, New York. Copp, Clark, Toronto. Price, \$1.25.