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PERHAPS the most pressing need of the literature of the present day, is that of a good writer for girls. The opposite sex is wellcatered for. The boy would be hard indeed to please who failed to be satisfied with such works as those of Mayne Reid, Fenn or Henty, but for his less fortunate sister no such feast has been provided. True, she may, if she will, read his books, but if she turns to those supposed to be written expressly for her benefit, there are few among them in which a girl of healthy mind would take pleasure.

The favorite of our own early days, Miss Charlotte M. Yonge, seems to be passing out of vogue. Beechcroft, The Three Brides, and many other similar stories, which were the delight of a simpler age, are now but little read, and their place is taken by such tales as the Elsie books, stories of impossibly perfect children, and impossibly hard-hearted parents. The code of morals which inculcated such old-fashioned notions as the obedience of children to parents and the greater wisdom of the aged, has vanished, but whether the new one is an improvement remains to be seen. For our own part we must confess to a warm sympathy with Mr. Dinsmore in his unconverted days, and a wild desire to shake his immaculate little daughter.

Too much of the American fiction of the present day has fallen into this morbid view of childhood, and to some extent the disease has spread across the ocean, and infected our English literature. One writer, however, there is, who has kept herself free from all taint of this error. Miss Mary Debenham in her book, A Little Candle has drawn for us a picture of simple and unaffected girlhood which it would be difficult to surpass.

The beginning of the tale is laid in a little hamlet in the lowlands of Scotland, during the brief reign of James the Second.

Bride Galbraith, the heroine, granddaughter of the clergyman of the village, is a charming study of girlhood, "a creature not too bright and good for human nature's daily food," but natural and childlike, full of small faults, but striving bravely to conquer them. The coming of her godfather, Major Ferguson, and her cousin, Alan Murray, brings a new interest into her life, and the happy days in the Scottish parsonage glide swiftly on. But with the Revolution trouble comes upon the quiet household. The grandfather, holding fast his loyalty to the Stuarts, is thrust from his living and shortly afterwards dies; and Bride, her mother and Alan, under the care of Major Ferguson, flee to France, the refuge of many a loyal Scot.

The Major joins the little company of Scottish gentlemen who volunteer to fight under King Louis, and we get a vivid picture of the deeds of that gallant little band, and the want and hardship which they suffered. At last, in tending a dead comrade's child, who is sickening with smallpox, the Major catches the fell disease, and comes home to die. We cannot forbear from quoting his death scene, which for simplicity and beauty equals any similar piece of writing of which we know.

Bride was a great deal with Major Ferguson in these days, for whether he recognized her or not, he liked to see her there. She never asked, perhaps because she feared the answer, why he was so often trusted to her now. She fancied sometimes that he must be better, for he always smiled at her, and spoke almost in his old way, and the restlessness and anxiety

seemed all gone. One evening he bade her commend him to Alan and bid him goodnight, but she scarcely knew whether he were wandering or not. Only, that night, some dim foreboding kept her in his room till morning. A still, sultry night, so different from that on which Bride had watched her grandfather, amid the wailing of the storm round the Highland shieling. As she sat in the window she fell to comparing the two who were foremost in all her thoughts—little Prue, with her nine years of easy duties and simple pleasures, and the Major's changeful, storm-tossed life with its ups and downs, its many disappointments and few successes. * * * She leaned her head wearily against the window frame, for the room was perfectly still and she was too young for even anxiety to be stronger than sleep. Still she only half lost consciousness, and roused directly at the sound of her godfather's voice. She heard her own name, and thought he had called her, but he was not conscious of her presence. He was back again in his young days among the Athole mountains.

"Tak' tent where ye're walking, little Bride," he said, "Brother will carry ye, my bairn, or we'll never win hame by supper time. Yon's the light we maun follow, but 'tis a kittle path for such wee feet." And after a moment's pause he repeated sadly—

"A kittle path—ay, a crooked path and little light to walk by."

Bride drew nearer to him, shading her lamp with her hand; but he was looking over her head, and his eyes had the untroubled brightness of a child's.

"Eh, see now," he said—but not to her—"The sun's aboon the hill."

Bride turned awe-struck to the window, almost looking to meet there the familiar sight of sunrise over the rugged hill-tops; but the garden and meadows were still and shadowy in the twilight between darkness and dawn. A bird stirred among the thick summer leaves; the cool breath that heralds the morning went up to heaven like an ascending prayer.

Another hour and the sun would be up, and the world waking to new hopes and fears, new longings and struggles. But one tired soldier would never fight any more, though upon his rugged path the sun had already risen.

But it was the dawning of an endless day. The rough sketch which is all we here have space for cannot give half the charm of the little tale, but if anyone should wish to present a girl with a book that would give her pleasure he could obtain none better than this. It is well bound and illustrated, and published by Thomas Whittaker, New York.

Mr. J. S. Fletcher's latest tale, Mistress Spitfire, which has been sent us for review by the Bain Book and Publishing Co. has added one more to the catalogue of historical romances which his gifted pen has given to us. Those who have read his former works will not be disappointed in this one, which is a vivid picture of the years between 1642 and 1644, told from the Parliamentarian point of view. The hero, Richard Coope, does not strike the fancy, but Mistress Alison French, the heroine, is a well drawn portrait of a spirited English girl, and the siege of the old manor and the events which follow furnish most interesting reading. Having once opened the book it is well nigh impossible to put it down unfinished. Towards the end of the tale comes an exceptionally vivid picture of a cavalry charge, which is worth quoting.

"With a swing and a clatter that woke all the echoes of the neighboring houses the troops dashed round the corner of the farmstead and into the presence of the Royalists. Every man of the latter had his sword drawn, and as the

Roundheads swung by, pulling on their horses' reins lest they should go over the river bank, they charged with a crash that made the blood tingle in my veins, and Alison cover her face with her hands. And in good sooth 'twas no pleasant sight we gazed upon. Three men had gone over the bank and were perishing miserably in the grey stream, calling on their friends for help that could not be given. Here and there, trampled underfoot by the horses, and presently battered into unrecognizable masses of flesh and blood, lay men that had been cut down ere ever they could draw weapon. High above the curses and cries, the shouting of the men and the neighing of the horses, rose the clatter of the swords, as Roundhead and Royalist hewed away at each other, and the battle cry of the latter, roared from the leathern lungs of Sergeant Strong, who was here and there like a mad bull, slaying at every stroke."

Those who are interested in the Stuart period will find this tale profitable reading. The plot is well worked out, and the characters sharply defined.

Rudyard Kipling's name is so well known among us to-day that it is strange to think that ten years ago it was scarcely heard. The ode given below is appropriate to this Jubilee season, as it was written by him for the last Jubilee. It is one of the finest of his poems, and is included in the American edition of his Barrack Room Ballads, but not in the Canadian one.

By the well where the bullocks go
Silent and blind and slow,
By the field where the young corn dies
In the face of the sultry skies,
They have heard as the dull earth hears
The voice of the wind of an hour,
The sound of the great Queen's voice:
'My God hath given me years,
Hath granted dominion and power;
And I bid you, O Land, rejoice.'

And the ploughman settles the share
More deep in the grudging clod,
For he saith, 'The wheat is my care,
And the rest is the will of God.
He sent the Mahratta spear
As he sendeth the rain,
And the Mlech, in the fated year,
Broke the spear in twain,
And was broken in turn. Who knows
How our Lords make strife?
It is good that the young wheat grows,
For the bread is life.'

Then, far and near, as the twilight grew,
Hissed up to the scornful dark
Great serpents, blazing, of red and blue,
That rose and faded, and rose anew,
That the land might wonder and mark.
'To-day is a day of days,' they said,
'Make merry, O people all.'
And the ploughman listened and bowed his head,
'To-day and to-morrow God's will,' he said,
As he trimmed the lamps on the wall.

He sendeth us years that are good,
As he sendeth the dearth.
He giveth to each his food,
Or her food to the earth.
Our Kings and our Queens are afar—
On their people be peace—
God bringeth the rain to the bar,
That our cattle increase.

And the ploughman settled the share
More deep in the sundried clod;—
Mogul, Mahratta or Mlech from the North,
And white Queen over the seas—
God raised them up and driveth them forth
As the dust of the ploughshare flies in the breeze;
And the wheat and the cattle are all my care,
And the rest is the will of God.

If Mr. Kipling had but been made Laureate what a Jubilee ode we should have had.