

the interest in much outside herself and her beloved family which pervade these letters and diaries, how morbid, precocious, egotistical and base appear the outpourings and questionings of Marie Bashkirtseff! Mr. Gladstone, with accustomed impetuosity, rushes to the conclusion, "Here were great powers," and compares the unfortunate and aspiring Marie to Homer. Others, less optimistic, do not scruple to assert that this Diary, while brilliant, erratic and unusual in the extreme, does not show promise of a high and original order of mind. Between the Scylla and Charybdis of criticism one can safely steer and give Marie Bashkirtseff, the female Chatterton, her rightful place, while, in the case of Miss Alcott, one is almost tempted to wish she had been even more ambitious, and had to work less for money than she unfortunately had to do. For if not "great powers," there were here at least great gifts.

Though her books only reveal talent, her life reveals something very much like genius. The star of an unconquered will—she had this. Magnificent determination, the power of keeping on in the face of discouragement and trial—she had this. At eight years of age she wrote creditable poetry. At ten, she kept an excellent diary, went to bed repeating poetry, cried over the "Vicar of Wakefield," while she ironed, husked corn, and listened to Emerson talk with her father—an idealist and vegetarian. At eleven, poetry began to flow copiously; she acted *Aspasia* magnificently in Mrs. Child's "Philothea," and learnt all about the bones in her body, very necessary, as she remarks, "I climb, and jump, and run so much." At twelve, she read Bettine's correspondence with Goethe, and at fifteen, she entered safely upon the sentimental period, writing letters to Ralph Waldo Emerson, but never sending them; sitting in a tall cherry-tree, at midnight, singing to the moon, till the owls scared her to sleep; leaving wild flowers on the door-step of her "Master," and singing Mignon's song, under his window, in very bad German. The stage next absorbed her active mind, and to read "Hamlet" among her friends was, at this time, her favourite pastime. A farce, from her pen, was brought out at the Howard Athenæum, and from this time she began to write assiduously, composition alternating with teaching school, going out to service, and sewing. Also, from this time, that is, from the age of eighteen, she devoted herself to her family, never relaxing for an hour in her endeavours to procure the certainty of a home for her visionary of a father, and daily necessities and comforts for her mother and sisters. Little by little, painfully, but always cheerily, the desired end came. From five dollars a story to thirty-five, from "sky-parlours" to luxurious rooms, near her favourite theatres and lecture-halls, her success, though slow, was sure, and when at last "Little Women" appeared on the scene, the victory was won.

Won, too, like many similar victories, at the expense of health and youth. Writing, as at the outset of her career, she did, fourteen hours a day, and then only taking up sewing or teaching as a recreation, no wonder the nervous mechanism wore out even before the body, and, at forty-two, she writes, speaking of the pleasures she would like to surround her family with:—"When I had the youth, I had no money; now I have the money, I have no time; and when I get the time, if ever I do, I shall have no health to enjoy life."

In Canada, as in her native country, the name of Louisa Alcott is associated with much that is pure, earnest and noble. Those who have cried and laughed, almost in the same breath, with Jo's attempts at authorship, Professor Bhaer and his boys, and the charming home life of the March family, ought to possess themselves of this delightful compilation.

MRS. WATTS HUGHES' "VOICE-FIGURES."

MRS. WATTS HUGHES' Home for Little Boys at Islington is known to many. Mr. Augustus Birrell's lecture on Gibbon in aid of its funds, delivered in February last at Westminster, and again last summer at Islington, was heard by many. The Home is one for the most homeless of little street urchins, the children chiefly of criminals; a home to eat and to sleep in, to play and to sing in, during all the hours of the twenty-four when they are not learning their lessons at the School Board school. At once on entering it, you feel that the judgment guiding the arrangements belongs to one or more friends of these little boys who put real heart into the business of making them happy and good; the kind of personal interest which can be traced in the management of all institutions of the kind which can be called, in the widest and truest sense, successful. But beyond this there is a touch of fairy-land about this Islington Home which is quite unique. Instead of blinds or curtains drawn across the lower panes of the windows, there are wonderful designs in colour; strange, beautiful things—suggesting objects in Nature, but which are certainly neither exact repetitions nor imitations of anything in Nature. They are more like, perhaps, what a dream might make out of the impressions left by Nature—perfectly drawn designs of shell-like forms, photographically precise renderings of shapes of which the exact originals were never seen by human eye on sea or land; such things as "Alice in Wonderland" might have come upon, had she tumbled down to the bottom of the sea. There are trumpet and snake-like forms twisted and involved in complicated curves, impelled on to the glass seemingly by the force of a power like that which impels and sculpts the boiling wreaths of steam out of the funnel

of a gasping engine. Pictured on the glass, they are rendered into the most elaborate and perfectly drawn perspective, each curve coloured and toned with gradations as subtle as any shell or petal of flower could be. Each foreshortened form of shell, trumpet, and snake is barred across by an infinity of lines, sometimes merely surrounding the forms by straight lines, at other times rippled in wavy lines ending at the edge by the daintiest of goffered frills. Across these lines will have been impelled on some of the glasses, other lines taking a contrary direction, the two sets in crossing each other forming a perfect honey-comb pattern. Most strange and suggestive, indeed, are those window-panes which the little boys at the Islington Home have to look through. They see weird caverns at the bottom of the sea full of beautifully coloured fancy sea-anemones and mussel-shells, headless snakes and fairy cups, and mossy entanglements of bud and leaf-like form; all seemingly vital, with the same laws of growth as those which inspired the creation of the designs in Nature which they suggest. The special force of nature which produced them is Mrs. Watts Hughes' voice. These are some varieties of her "voice-figures." There are other classes which resemble more distinctly flowers.

I, with other friends, have been fortunate enough to see all the different classes of figures produced more than once, and will try and describe shortly what we saw when those classes of figures were produced of which there are specimens now being exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition. First, for the daisy-like figure, of which there are examples in a case at the New Gallery, Mrs. Hughes prepares a paste of flake-white powder-colour and water, and into a metal tube turned up at the end she inserts a ring resembling a table-napkin ring, over one end of which is stretched a thin membrane of india-rubber. The tube being inverted at the end, while singing through it, she looks straight down on the india-rubber disc. She covers this disc with a little water, and then taking up some of the flake-white paste with a penknife she adds it to the water, which floats it all over the disc. She then sings into the tube a low note of her voice—a note not very loud, but firm and wilful. The effect on the paste is immediate. Tiny globules are thrown up into the air above the disc, and sputtering and leaping all alive with the motion caused by the vibrations of her voice, crowd into the centre of the membrane, making a little round heap like the centre of a daisy. Mrs. Hughes then alters the character of the note she is singing, though not its pitch. Instead of the note of firm, preparatory character, she sings a very sustained and insidious sound. Then, from the round centre of white paste will fly out, at unequal distances, little tentative star-like jets. Sometimes two or three such furtive attempts at a start will have been made, when suddenly a perfect and symmetrical row of petals will start out and create with the centre a lovely little, exquisitely finished, daisy-like form. Sometimes even three rows of petals will be the answer to the song-note, whereas at other times the one row will be imperfect, and will require singing in again to the centre before a perfect regular row produces itself. The pansy form is produced somewhat in the same way as the daisy, but more water is put on the disc in proportion to the paste, and the note is altered and sung differently, only as Mrs. Watts Hughes knows how to alter and sing it. It must be remembered that it is no ordinary voice or singing which creates these figures. Those who have had the happiness to hear Mrs. Hughes sing parts of Gluck's "Orphée," or Pergolesi's "Stabat Mater," and last, not least, her own national Welsh air, "The Ash-Grove," must realise that there are very few even among the greatest singers who can rival her in the science of using the vocal organ in all its infinite delicacies, intricacies, and distinctions, and who can express pathetic and dramatic emotion with as much power and beauty.

For the singing of the shell and trumpet-like figures, Mrs. Hughes also prepares a paste with powder-colour and water; but instead of the flake-white, she uses prussian-blue, madder-lake, or any other colour which she has found, by its weight and character, will respond to the vibrations of her voice, and will work easily on the glass and membrane. She rubs the membrane over with this paste, and likewise the piece of glass on which she is going to sing the figure. For a small piece of glass she will use an inverted tube, as in the production of the floral forms, and will move the glass rapidly round on the disc of india-rubber, while she sings a firm, sustained, but short note. It is the work of a second, and we see on the glass one of the strange, nameless forms. Should the glass be too large to hold in the hand, then Mrs. Hughes uses a straight tube, and sings a note while moving it round or along the glass.

What it all means, no one, least of all Mrs. Watts Hughes, pretends to be able to explain. These voice-figures are facts which it is to be hoped science may be able, sooner or later, to explain. Every year more and more curious developments of these facts are created, and all whom they interest must wish Mrs. Watts Hughes may be able to continue working at them. Any day she may sing some fresh wonder which may facilitate the work of science, and lead to a fuller understanding of them. Meanwhile we must go on wondering why these vibrations of the voice should lead to the formation of designs so nearly the copy of flowers and ferns and trees and shells.

But no explanation is needed to make us enjoy the beauty of these voice-figures. Artists to whom they have been shown are enthusiastic in their admiration of them. They are particularly artistically interesting in one way. The old saying attributed to Titian, "Colour is quality,"

is by them amply exemplified. Most of these voice figures have been sung in the most ordinary colours; but the exquisite perfection and finish of the designs, and the subtle toning, shading, and gradation which the singing gives to this ordinary powder and water, produces a quality and beauty of colour which might be a lesson to any painter. If "colour is quality," what then is quality? Is it not the suggestion of life and growth? Why have some works of art that sense of life, and others, on the contrary, the sense of death—of finality—an absence of any power of suggestions to the mind to go on working beyond what is actually before the eye? In the actual manipulation of the colour, is it not the touch that suggests *mouvement*, that gives quality to the work of a real artist's painting? The touch not tightly restrained within hard and defined outline, but thrown loosely on to the canvas with a grace of unasserted security as to being in the right place, though suggesting a power of motion—a thing of life, and not of death—so, in the voice figures, this "quality" which gives us such beautiful colour, is it not the result of the suggestion of the force of motion which the figures give us? And more than this: do they not suggest that many more things in the world about us may have been created by sound? If one woman's voice can sing such strange and beautiful designs, what may not other sounds have created? What may they not be now creating around us?—*Emilie Isabel Barrington, in The Spectator.*

THE WEIRD OF THE GREAT LAKE.

THERE'S a spirit that haunts the great silent sea
Or lies alert on the lake's lone isles,
Oh the pale still victims unnumbered be,
And the Weird hovers o'er and smiles.

On the Lake Superior's lofty coasts,
In the tamarack forest's unhealthy glades,
The dead lie and rot in unnumbered hosts
And there writhe the tortured shades.

The dread spirit broods where the whitened skulls
In the mighty chasms are crowned with flowers;
She broods o'er the black, dismantled hulls,
O'er the wrecked ships her storm shape towers.

She broods o'er the ice fields, her fingers close
With a numbness like death round her victim's brain,
And the death-sleep comes swift, and the last repose,
And the snow-wreaths drift o'er the slain.

The dark spirit broods o'er her living prey,
And tempts them unseen with a maddening charm,
And they drink till the horrors of madness lay
Their souls within reach of her arm.

And remorseless she tortures her nameless dead
And they writhe and cry out in vain, voiceless prayer,
And she laughs like the winds at the blood she has shed,
—Laughs out in the darkened air!

R. P.

THE OLD DISTRICT OF GORE.

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE WILDS OF THE GORE DISTRICT,
NOW INCLUDING THE COUNTIES OF WENTWORTH, HALTON,
WELLINGTON, WATERLOO AND BRANT, AND THE CITIES OF
HAMILTON, GUELPH, BRANTFORD AND MANY LARGE TOWNS.

IN the year 1831 I was the deputy clerk of the peace at Hamilton in the office of the late Robert Berrie, a Scotch barrister, formerly from the East Indies and the son of a Scotch gentleman and an East Indian lady. He was at that time the clerk of the peace of the said large district of Gore—then comprising the above named counties with a sparse population and immense ranges of woods, swamps and wilderness tracts, settled more or less by hardy pioneers. I was a student-at-law of two years' standing, articled to the said Mr. Berrie and employed as such clerk in said office, and a part of my duty was to make out, from the assessment lists of the various townships included in the said counties left in the clerk of the peace office by assessors, collector's rolls—which contained the names of all farmers assessable in the counties. My law master and superior, Mr. Berrie, gave me the job of the personal delivery of all collectors' rolls to the collectors in that year, and I think I was to get \$31 for it. The collectors lived in the far and drear townships in the wildest part of the counties, and some nearer Hamilton. It was a great undertaking for a young man, yet, being in those days an expert horseman, used all my boyhood life to riding on horseback through fields and woods and on roads, I was not afraid to undertake this job in the wilderness. Much of the work could only be done by horseback through blind roads. So having obtained the use of a favourite mare of my father's named Pink, a beautiful little bay animal, very gentle, fleet of foot and nimble as a deer, with a beautiful skin, fine black eye and flowing mane and tail, I set off in the month of June, 1831, to traverse the great wooded counties aforesaid. The woods were glowing with pristine sheen, the trees were beautiful and just emitting their spring fragrance, beneath whose branches the solemn Indian had trod for generations and the wild deer had swiftly passed. It is a solemn thing to be in the deep, silent forest, to hear only the echoes of the wild things—the songs of birds, the chirp of the squirrel, drumming of the partridge, the scream of the eagle, or the wild cat! and into the wild woods of this