

long ago, that in the children of to-day lies the potential realization of *our* ideals. Further, the thoughtful man has much the same feeling with regard to little children as Wordsworth had toward nature, that here he finds a manifestation of the Eternal which, owing to its unconsciousness, is not marred by the idiosyncrosies that the later growth of individual consciousness involves.

In this paper there is almost nothing of a critical nature, because it is written, not to criticise, but to introduce some of the best works dealing with the period of childhood. Many of the books on this subject are bad, others are fair, while several are exceedingly good. To a few of the last the attention of the reader is directed, for even the university man should not reject such books as unworthy of his interest. In them he will find much food for reflection, but, better still, he will breathe again the fresh enchanted air of childhood and feel once more the glamour of "the golden age."

Passing now to the books themselves, consider for a moment a dainty little volume of verse, illustrated in the quaintest and most appropriate fashion. It is called *A Child's Garden of Verses*, by Robert Louis Stevenson, and first appeared several years ago in a much homelier dress. The charm of Stevenson's style and the fascinating interest of his tales are well known. But in this book are found two other qualities essential to the portrayal of child life—sympathy and direct simplicity—the result of similar traits in his character. For the man who could inspire in the hearts of the rude Samoan chiefs such love that they built and named for him "The Road of the Loving Heart" was the kind of man to realize and reveal the subtle impulses and fancies of childhood. And we find the very breath and finer spirit of childhood in those verses, which wander along in a delightfully inconsecutive way, thoroughly characteristic of the attitude of children towards life. Take as an instance this bit of childish observation:

"In winter I get up at night
And dress by yellow candle-light.
In summer, quite the other way,
I have to go to bed by day."

or again,

"It is very nice to think
The world is full of meat and drink,
With little children saying grace
In every Christian kind of place."

or this happy thought,

"The world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

Among the more recent works, two by American authors deserve special mention. *Trumpet and Drum* is a collection of verses by the late Eugene Field, of whom a prominent writer has said: "Of

all American poets Field best understood the heart of a child." Many of them are well known, having already appeared in the magazines, and, taken as a whole, they maintain a high level of excellence. The most popular and perhaps the best is "Little Boy Blue," with its delicate touch of pathos, so characteristic of the author. James Whitcomb Riley strikes a somewhat similar note in *A Child World*:

"The child world—long and long since lost to view—
A Fairy Paradise!
How always fair it was and fresh and new—
How every affluent hour heaped heart and eyes
With treasures of surprise!"

The poet goes on in a reminiscent view to give a continuous narrative of early days, with alternating humor and pathos. Occasionally in his pictures of the old home life he drops into dialect, but the more serious verse is best:

"O child world! After this world—just as when
I found you first sufficed
My soulmost need—if I found you again,
With all my childish dream so realized,
I should not be surprised."

Turning from poetry to prose, two works stand out above the others; *The Golden Age*, by Kenneth Grahame, and *Sweetheart Travellers*, by the well-known Scottish novelist, S. R. Crocket. The first is a series of sketches giving the ideas and adventures of a family of orphans brought up by an aunt, aided by the advice of sundry other aunts and uncles, as recorded from memory by one of the children, long after "the gates had shut behind them on those days of old." Many of the sketches treat of struggles between the children and the Olympians (as the grown-up folk are called) which result from the total inability of the Olympians to look at life from the child's point of view. They are full of good things, and beneath their veil of humour lies a fund of suggestion which should be taken to heart by all Olympians who may chance to read them. The whole conception is carried out in the most natural and effective way. "*Sweetheart Travellers*, a book for children, for women and for men" is the story of a trip through Wales on a bicycle, taken by Mr. Crocket and his sweetheart—his little daughter, aged five—with several other sketches in the same vein. The varying interest is skillfully maintained and one as he reads, almost fancies himself spinning through the beautiful mountain country, enjoying the scenery so graphically pictured and listening to the innocent prattle and quaint sayings of the little maid who all through is the central figure. A few of the later chapters hardly preserve this high level and indeed the book might be shortened somewhat with good effect.