

## Recent Fiction.\*

WE are glad to welcome another story by S. R. Crockett dealing with the Lowland Scotch, and to add it to those of a similar character with which we have already been treated by himself, Barrie, and Ian MacLaren. With the exception of some opening scenes in London, and some closing ones for which Paris, at the time of the Commune, forms the background—all of which are full of turmoil and gloom—"A Galloway Herd" breathes the fresh air of the Scotch heath, and introduces us mostly to sober Cameronians. A plot runs through the book, but it is not well balanced and the interest lies much more in the character sketching and the dialogue. Certain of the adventures which take place in that God-fearing community during the present century strike us as rather far-fetched. Some of the characters are like the men of Drumtochty, and we enjoyed reading about their ways and their doings. The principal ones drawn are:—M'Quhrr, a good-hearted, solemn elder and his loveable wife, with his boys, sturdy Aleck, the model James, and mischievous Rab; the somewhat Pharisaic Peter Christie and his daughter Nance; the rough and brutal poacher, Sandy Bean, who rather suddenly turns into a law-abiding Scot; Mrs. Nellie Anderson, fresh from a London tragedy but gradually inoculated by Drumquhat air and sympathy till the old things of her life pass away; and last and most important of all, Walter Anderson, Nellie's boy, a child all through the book, whose ambition it is to be "a Galloway Herd." The weakness of the book lies in the failure of the story to hang together. We have but a confused idea of the relations between Nellie Anderson and Herbert Peyton, the villain of the plot, and there is no earthly reason assigned for the trip to Paris, which trip could well be dispensed with. But we pardon these defects, serious as they are in a connected story, for the sake of the scenes in Scotland which make up the bulk of the book.

One day Walter, about six years old, gets lost on the moor. He has no fear by day, but when night comes on it is quite another matter. After a run from an unseen monster he lies down to rest with the following prayer:—

"O Lord, forgive us our sins, and remember not our trans-somethings against us. Look down from heaven and help"—(so far his petitions had run in the accustomed groove carefully modelled upon the prayer of Saunders the elder, but now the official supplications broke down and the personal came in)—"and help a wee laddie in a moss-hole. Keep him frae teegers, an' lions, an' bogles, an' black horses that come oot o' the lochs an' eat ye up, an' frae green monkeys that hing on trees, an' claw ye as ye gang by; an' gie me something to eat, for I'm near deid wi' hunger, an', my word, but I'll warm Yarra (that's my dowg) for runnin' awa', when I catch him, an' bless my mither an' a' inquiren' freen's, Amen."

Presently Walter makes the acquaintance of a little girl who thinks he is "the nicest boy she ever saw," and he tells her about his cats, ten in number:—

"Specklie's an awfu' thief." This with an accent of pride. "How is that?" asked the little girl.

"Well," said Walter, "ye see Specklie is no' a hoose cat. He bides in the barn and whiles in the byre. And when ony o' the decent hoose cats come oot into the yaird wi' a moose or onything to eat, Specklie is doon frae the riggin' like a shot, an' there's a graun' fecht, lyin' on their backs an' fechtin', an' spittin' an' rowin' ower like a ba'—."

"Horrid creatures!" said the little girl. "My cat Flossie never does that!" This with her little nose high in the air.

"May be there's nae Specklie in your yaird!" said Walter, compassionately. "But it's no' a lang fecht, though graun' while it lasts—for a' in a meenit the hoose cat'll be rinnin' a' it can for the hoose wi' a tail like a heather besom, an' Specklie sittin' on the riggin' o' the barn eatin' the hoose cat's breakfast."

"What a very wicked beast! Tell me more about Specklie." Specklie's wickedness was fascinating above the tame excellence of many "hoose cats."

The book is full of good things, as when poor little Walter, after sleeping at intervals during a long sermon on "the spiritual rights of a covenanted Kirk" for what seemed a week, at length stands on the seat with the words "Will that man no' sune be dune?" or the account of his preaching to the crows. Peter Christie and his daughter Nance come in for a good deal of attention. He is blessed with a

lazy servant, and has occasionally to persuade him to get up with a stout hazel stick. He does not look with favour on Aleck M'Quhrr's attentions to Nance. These, by the way, are delightfully worked into the story. When they inform him one day that they have made up their minds to be married, the old man bursts into a tempest of wrath, gets upset in the peat by Nance, and is hauled by Aleck "out of the tenacious black mass with a *cloop* like the uncorking of a bottle." They bring him to terms because they have got knowledge of his being mixed up with poachers, and Nance remorselessly makes him promise, niggardly though he is, "twal score o' sheep," "a matter o' maybes ten kye," and "twa pair o' horse an' my ain' powny" towards their house-keeping. When the deal was over—

"Nance," said her lover, "what made ye so sore on yer faither? We could hae managed withoot that."

"Aleck," said the practical Nance, "we'll be nane the waur o' the beast, an' he'll like us a' the better for no' being saft wi' him. Mair nor that, he can brow an' weel afford it."

A clever idea lies at the basis of "An Arranged Marriage." Mr Brand, a *nouveau riche*, buys an old English country property but cannot get into the county society for which he craves. He goes abroad, stumbles across an Italian countess, who has an obstinate son, Luigi, in the army. She has determined that a wealthy bride is necessary for him to restore the decayed fortunes of the family. Mr. Brand has a charming and beautiful daughter, and they arrange that these two shall marry. The difficulty lies in bringing this about, for if either of the two chief parties suspected a plot, goodbye to the scheme. The finesse of the old lady manages to make them fall in love of their own accord, but all is nearly ruined on the eve of betrothal. An Italian girl, who is in love with Luigi, arrives on the scene, discovers the plot, and nearly brings about a catastrophe. All ends well, but the happy consummation is accomplished only in a rather forced way and strikes us as a blemish on the working out of the story. Of course Mr. Brand is welcomed on his return with open arms by his aristocratic neighbours. Miss Brand is very proper and demure at first, but she has a thoroughly good heart and blossoms out wonderfully under the influence of her love.

In the "Martyred Fool" there are two parts, "The Sowing of the Seed" and "The Reaping of the Harvest." In the former the hero, Evan Rhys, is a boy of eight and we see the process of his being fledged into a red-hot anarchist. The scene is Australia, and his father is hung for killing a wealthy neighbour, more or less in self-defence. There is a capital description of little Evan's long tramp from Melbourne to Adelaide. In the second part the scene has shifted to Paris and Evan has grown up a socialist, but not an anarchist. He becomes entangled with some of the latter type, is made a tool of, and the story deals with the way his eyes become open to their real characters, but unfortunately not till it is too late to avoid a tragedy. Evan is well drawn both as a boy and a man, and though he is rather a "Fool" he deserves a better end than being blown into fragments with a lot of scoundrelly anarchists. We think, however, that fourteen years of the most kind-hearted treatment at the hands of one of the hated "aristocrats" who had adopted him, might have acted as a corrective to the seeds of bitterness sown in his childhood.

\* \* \*

## Letters to the Editor.

## THE COPYRIGHT QUESTION.

SIR,—To appreciate the puerile position taken up by Canada in this copyright controversy with the Mother Country, one has only to read the British Blue Book of 1895 containing all the correspondence since 1889.

When, in 1892, the Imperial Committee, appointed to consider the whole question, reported that Canada would be completely isolated by the passage of our Act of 1889, and the interests of her authors and artists destroyed, the following is a sample reply of our Government under date of February 7th, 1894, to wit:—

Par. 63. "The report under review devotes a paragraph to the interests of the Canadian author, of whom it is said that under the Canadian Act of 1889, he would be deprived of copyright in every country outside of Canada. This would be by no means the case, unless Imperial legislation were adopted to withdraw from Canadians not only the rights within the Empire, conceded to all British subjects, but the

\* "A Galloway Herd." By S. R. Crockett. New York: R. F. Fenn & Co. Toronto: Revell & Co. Cloth, \$1.00. Paper, 50c.

"An Arranged Marriage." By Dorothea Gerard. London and New York: Longmans, Green & Co. Longmans Colonial Library.

"The Martyred Fool." By David Christie Murray. London and New York: Macmillan & Co. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co. Macmillan's Colonial Library.