

*Weir of Hermiston.* By Robert Louis Stevenson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

A tragic story of the Scottish moorlands and regarded by the author as his best work. In a letter written before his death, he says: "The story unfolds itself before me to the least detail . . . I never felt so in anything I ever wrote before. It will be my best work." He did not live to finish it. The story breaks off abruptly just at its highest tension and remains "a splendid tragic fragment." People who like to have the personages to whom they are introduced in fiction authenticated as portraits of actual men and women will probably take much satisfaction in the assurance that the elder Weir is avowedly suggested by the historic personality of Robert Macqueen, Lord Braxfield, otherwise known as the Hanging Judge, and that a number of the other characters had their living prototypes among the author's acquaintances. Mr. Calvin, who, as Stevenson's literary executor, appends to this edition an editorial note, says that he prefers that the mind be left to its own conjectures as to the sequel, with such help as the text itself affords. But for the benefit of those who do not take this view of the case, which, after all, is not very practical, he appends the plot of what remained to be written, as outlined by Stevenson to his amanuensis, Mrs. Strong. Weir of Hermiston is laid out upon broader lines than is usual with Stevenson. There is indicated a more careful analysis of character and a deeper inquiry into springs of human action than he was wont to bestow, and there is no lessening of the grace of diction and felicity of phrase which he has made preëminently his own.

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*Overland to Cariboo.* By Margaret McNaughton. Toronto: William Briggs.

The book enjoys distinct advantage in finding publication when general attention is directed towards its own objective point, the gold-fields of British Columbia. It is not only a graphic account of hazardous enterprises successfully accomplished, but also purposes to show

the resources of a region whose vast territory and practically limitless possibilities are even yet hardly appreciated by people at home or abroad. The account of the journey is largely derived from a journal kept by one of the handful of men who crossed the plains of British North America (known then as the Hudson Bay Territory) in 1862. Mrs. McNaughton is the wife of one of these pioneers, and her simple, graceful diction is a fitting vehicle for the picturesque incidents and thrilling adventures with which the book is replete.

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*Poems and Ballads.* By Robert Louis Stevenson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

There are soils that impart to the fruit grown upon them a flavor found in none other—hillside vineyards whose grapes yield a wine of inimitable fire and sparkle—valleys where the smokers' weed of delight grows in unequalled perfection. So in these poems there is something special and unique, something springing from the nature of the man and defying imitation. It is here rather than in his prose that we find the whole man revealed, that we see registered the deeper convictions as well as the passing moods and fancies of a rare and eager spirit, full of courage, in love with life, yet not afraid of death. From the exquisite pipings of fancy in the "Child's Garden of Verse" to the deeply echoing strains in "Underwood" is a wide range, yet all the notes are fresh and true. The cheerful, manly tone of the book adds to its value; there is not a whimper in all its pages. The writer had enough to complain of, in truth; but he did not practise the art of whining millifluously. His was one of those brave, bright spirits sometimes pent in a frail and suffering body; and his firm acceptance of the inevitabilities of life and death is best expressed in the oft-quoted "Requiem." Nor did he merely endure—he enjoyed; taking "pleasure in all that comes:" the "silver-skimming rain," the "fairy wheel and thread of cob-web," the "inviolate, green, rustic rivers," the "evening's amethyst," the "unmoored cloud galleons," and the autumnal frosts that "enchant the pool"