

The Rockwood Review.

THE CRUSADE OF THE CHILDREN.

A. D., 1212.

The strangest army on sea or shore,
Told in legends and tales of yore,
Read, and wondered, and pondered o'er,
Was the tragic rising the children made
Six hundred years ago and more ;
When the boy Saint Stephen preached and prayed,
In cassock, and staff, and stole arrayed,
And thousands joined in the wild crusade
To rescue the Holy Sepulchre.

And the lanes of Europe were all astir,
From Cloyes in France and Boulogne-Surmer,
When the wonderful mission and march began,
To the smallest hamlet among the hills,
The little ones gathered in tiny rills,
'Till at length a mighty river ran,
And the Cross marched ever in the van
To rescue the Holy Sepulchre.

Nor threats availed, nor bolt nor bar,
Nor tears by sorrowful mother shed,
Nor the gleam of the Paynim Scimitar,
Where the Knights of the Rosy Cross lay dead
To the children bound for the holy war.
And the cruel stones of the foreign street
Bruised and wounded the childish feet,
And the dimpled limbs were torn and bled,
And baby voices cried for bread,
Where hundreds perished of thirst and heat.

And some were wrecked on the dreadful sea,
And some were sold to the brutal Moor,
The waves more pitiful far than he
To the helpless babes on a heathen shore.
And so but a wreck in rags arrayed,
That never had met the Moslem foe,
Came wandering back, forlorn and slow,
To the desolate homes that had mourned them so,
And there was the end of the strange Crusade,
And the Holy War which the children made
Ever and ever so long ago.

K. S. McL.