
THE LITERARY KINGDOM

BY M. M. KILPATRICK.

TO have no personal knowledge of the people who write the books we love is usually a matter of feliciation. Biography and tradition remind us of the bumptiousness of Byron, the bearishness of Tennyson, the pedantry of Wadsworth, and the *ego* of Carlyle. Even "Middlemarch" is less enthralling when one has incontestable evidence that George Eliot was a tiresome old frump who kept everybody around her closing doors or opening windows, giving her a shawl or finding her a foot-stool, being certain that the thermometer was at such a point and equally certain that the water, of which she wanted to drink, was pure. And Ouida's books are less of a surprise to us when we learn that in Florence she might be seen any day mounted on a beautiful horse, wearing a crimson velvet riding habit, with her golden hair hanging loose below her waist and her steed followed by at least twenty dogs, various in their kind and all shrieking in different notes.

A friend of ours once abandoned all books for a period of six months, as she was that length of time recovering from her first visit to a literary house. This is what she said about it: "The lady who kept the salon was tall and gaunt, and was living on vegetables because she was a Buddhist. Her right-hand man (by-the-by, he was not her husband) was a poet, and he talked all the time about the feelings of the innermost heart; it was exactly as if hearts were in layers like cream caramels. Then there was a young woman who knew all about Shakespeare, another who did not believe that Shakespeare had ever existed, another who thought that Bacon wrote Shakespeare and was helped by a young actor named William Shakes-

peare to attend to the stage business. Then there was a lanky young woman who seemed to be a succession of hollows, and she talked about the days of real love, hinted about things that were wrong, and wanted to give me the impression that if she could tell her heart's story, I would be very much shocked. I don't believe she had any. Everybody asked you if you had read this or that; and if you said you had and liked it, they disagreed with you, and if you said you had not, then they thought you ought; and anyhow, no matter what you said, they decided at once that you were wrong. When religion was discussed all sects were found fault with, though one poet said that the Catholic Church was picturesque. He condescended so when he said this that I wondered if he were going to cable the Pope for his thanks! There were three men who had not read anything, and they looked frightened. When the others discovered that I had not written a book, or even a fashion article, that I did not paint, or sculp or read in public, one young woman said to me, 'At least you sit at the feet of Carlyle.'? I told her 'No, I do not, and I find Carlyle tiresome.' After that they let me alone." One cannot but wonder what would have happened if in reality anybody had sat at the feet of Carlyle. The ill-tempered Scotchman would probably have kicked them, and the treatment would have been eminently proper.

CONCURRENT opinion pronounces Ian Maclaren (Rev. John Watson) a man whom one can afford to know. Those qualified to speak with authority assure us that his personal magnetism, rare intellectuality, broad humanity, delightful *comaraderie* and unique power as a