

Books and Periodicals

Looks into Books.

Gideon to Absalom.

THE name of Dr. Alexander Whyte, of Free St. George's, Edinburgh, is known as far as the English speech has gone as one of the great preachers of the century. Travellers tell with subdued voice of the throngs that wait upon his ministry; of the intensity, fervor, and spiritual power of the preacher; of his heart-searching utterances, his keenness of interpretation, and his deep hatred of sin.

The last of the Puritans, he has been called, and certainly the flavor of the noblest of the Puritans is in everything spoken and written by this eminent modern preacher. He possesses the strong, uncompromising spirit of these old worthies; and he possesses it because he has given his days and nights to the study of their works, and has learned to appreciate the reality and depth of their devotion. Everyone is familiar with his "Bunyan's Characters." No study of the great English allegory is complete without a perusal of Dr. Whyte's sketches.

The present volume, "Gideon to Absalom," is a continuation of his Bible Character series. They were delivered as Sabbath evening discourses, and possess the directness and fire of his pulpit utterance. We pity the individual who can read these pages unmoved. Now the nerves are quickened by the realism of his description, then you are attracted by his mysticism and imaginative insight, and before long you become conscious that you are reading, not the story of either Gideon or Absalom's life, but of your own. Fresh as the winds of the breezy hills, practical as the demands of our common days, throbbing with the pulse of a man's heart, this is a book to make one better and stronger.

Open the volume where you will, you will find paragraphs that hold the attention. Here are two paragraphs from the very first page which, as well as any, may be taken to illustrate the rich quality of Dr. Whyte's work. He is dealing with an incident in the life of Gideon:

"A powerfully built, middle-aged man of Manasseh is busy beating out a few blasted ears of corn in a secret winepress. He beats the sheaves softly, lest the sound of his staff should tell the Midianites where the wheat is. He stops his work to dry his face and to wet his lips, but all the water in the well would not put out the fire that is in his eye, for the fire that is in his eye is his hot heart rising to heaven against the oppressors of his people. 'The Lord is with thee,' the angel of the Lord appeared at that moment and said to Gideon, 'for thou art a mighty man of valor!' Gideon thought that the angel of the Lord was mocking at him in so speaking. 'The Lord with me! and I have not meal enough to make my children's supper! I, a mighty man of valor, when I am afraid to thrash out my few stalks of wheat on the threshing-floor, but must hide myself in this hidden winepress! Call me not a mighty man of valor. Call me a God-forsaken coward!' But the angel of the Lord only the more went on, 'Go in this thy might and thou shalt save Israel.'

"No sooner had the angel of the Lord taken his departure than Gideon threw down his staff and went into the house where his mother sat mourning day and night for the loss of her sons slain at Tabor, each one resembling the son of a king. And Gideon

said to his weeping mother, 'Awake, my mother and sing to me the song of Deborah.' And while she only the more sat and wept, her son took out and whetted his sword and sharpened his axe. 'Sing to me,' he said, 'how Deborah and Barak arose and delivered Israel. Sing to me, ye daughters of Joush, of how the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.' Night fell; and at midnight, behold ten men, and each man with a pitcher and a lamp in it in his left hand, and with his axe in his right hand, stole out of his house and met Gideon. Their meeting was beside the altar of Baal and in the grove of Baal, which was built and planted in Joush's high place. For, how could Joush's son think to cast out a single Midianite, as long as that unclean altar and those unclean trees stood beside his father's house? He could not. But at every blow of Gideon's swift axe new strength came into his arm. At every tree that fell before his axe his courage rose. And the light of God's countenance returned already to Israel in every star that shone down through the opening spaces in the grove of Baal. Why is your life in such bondage and fear and famine to-night? Why have you not been fed to-day and every day with the finest of the wheat? Why are you not satisfied every day with honey out of the rock? Arise in this thy might and the Lord will make of thee also a mighty man of valor. Be sure of this that thy sure way of deliverance and peace and plenty lies for thee also through the levelled grove and over that prostrate altar.

'The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne
And worship only thee.'

This volume, as well as the first of the series, "Adam to Achan," is published by Fleming H. Revell Company, Toronto; price, \$1.25.

Whiffs from Wild Meadows.

Literary critics may differ as to what is the best poetry, but the ordinary reader will settle the matter for himself by declaring it to be the poetry he likes the best. Sam Walter Foss may not be a great poet, but he is a poet, and a poet whom the people like. It is a good many years since his poems began to appear in various journals, and discriminating readers have learned to appreciate highly his quaint humor and his sturdy common sense. He has had skill to recognize his own particular field of literature, and he has cultivated it with continuous success. What that field is we will leave it to himself to say:

"Ah, there are many average men,
And all so good and bad like you,
And all so bad and good like me;
And all so false and all so true,
So full of joy and misery—
Should not a poet now and then
Make songs to glad these average men?"

These "Whiffs from Wild Meadows" are rich and racy, humorous and pathetic, grave and gay, full of rural sights and sounds, and touching closely the simple lives of farm and village folk. This volume is a fitting successor to the author's "Back Country Poems." But we must let him speak a little for himself, which he is much better able to do than we are to speak for him.