

POETRY.

THE SONG OF THE OLD MOTHER.

I rise at the dawn, and I kneel and blow
Till the seed of the fire flicker and glow,
And then I must mend and bake and sweep
Till stars are beginning to blink and peep;
While the young lie long and dream in their bed
Of the matching of ribbons the blue and the red.
And their day goes over in idleness,
And they sigh if the wind but lift up a tress;
But the seed of the fire gets feeble and cold,
And I must work because I am old.

W. B. YEATS.

[The "seed of the fire" is the Irish phrase for the little fragment of burning turf and hot ashes which remains in the hearth from the day before.]

ALL SOULS' EVE.

I cried all night to you,
I called till day was here,
Perhaps you could not come,
Or were too tired, dear.

Your chair I set by mine,
I made the dim hearth glow,
I whispered, "When he comes
I shall not let him go."

I closed the shutters tight,
I feared the dawn of day,
I stopped the busy clock
That timed your hours away.

Loud howled my neighbour's dog,
O glad was I to hear.
The dead are going by,
Now you will come, my dear,

To take the chair by mine—
Until the cock would crow—
O, if it be you came,
And could not let me know,

For once a shadow passed
Behind me in the room,
I thought your loving eyes
Would meet mine in the gloom.

And once I thought I heard
A footstep by my chair,
I raised my eager hands,
But no sweet ghost was there.

We were too wide apart—
You in your spirit land—
I knew not when you came,
I could not understand.

Your eyes perhaps met mine,
Reproached me through the gloom,
Alas, for me alone
The empty, empty room!

The dead were passing home,
The cock crew loud and clear,
Mavourneen, if you came,
I knew not you were here.

DORA SIGERSON.

NEW WRITERS.

MR. D. S. MELDRUM.

THE author of 'Margrédél,' reviewed in the present number of THE BOOKMAN, is a journalist, and much of what he has written has therefore been published anonymously. He has, however, found time to write some excellent fiction in his own name, besides his recently published novel, and there is reason to think he will write a great deal more.

His first story, "Rathillet," was published in *Blackwood's Magazine* a year or two ago, and has since been reprinted in 'Tales from Blackwood.' Mr. Meldrum adds his testimony to that of many other young authors as to the courtesy and encouragement with which his work was treated by Mr. Blackwood. The 'Story of Margrédél' was accepted by the same magazine, and has just been reprinted in volume form. Some months after his first story was published, Mr. Meldrum left business in which he was engaged in Scotland, and threw himself into journalistic work in London, in association with Mr. W. E. Hodgson. For two years he edited *Rod and Gun*, and under both Mr. Alfred Austin and Mr. Hodgson was a regular contributor to the *National Review*, the article "Among the Books" being entrusted to him. Some of his short stories were published in the same periodical, and one of them, "A Comedy of Courtship," was included in a volume of stories reprinted from the *Review*. Mr. Meldrum has besides contributed largely to other magazines and newspapers. Another one-volume novel from his pen, 'A Grey Romance,' was published recently by Messrs. Allen.

Mr. Meldrum is a Fife man, and all his stories are of The Kingdom o' Fife, which he calls "a wonderful county," and which certainly has a very distinct character of its own. It was always in the van of civilisation, and so, although full of relics of historic interest, it scarcely holds so many traditions of troublous times as other parts of Scotland. It is essentially a picturesque county, for in it are Falkland, Dunfermline, St. Andrews, and Magus Muir, but most of the colour of its history is derived from the individuality of its burgh life.

MR. S. R. CROCKETT.

TODAY Galloway lies calm and quiet—only distressed by the fall in agricultural values and the fact that she does not understand the interest in Mr. Crockett's stories of the past. These have hitherto slept quietly in Nicholson and Murray, and been talked of in the herd's cot among the hills. It seems impossible that such things should attract attention at a time when Castle Douglas is pulling down her auction marts and building greater.

Mr. Crockett was born at the little farmhouse of Duchrae (about a mile from the present New Galloway Station), somewhere about the end of the year 1859. The Duchrae folk are not yet forgotten in the parish, though the little

thin-soiled farm has been twenty-five years in the hands of others. Patient, quiet, "nurtured and admonished in the Lord," these douce Cameronians fulfilled their daily toil, and on Sabbath rattled solemnly off to the Kirk at Castle Douglas nine miles away, in order that, in Mr. Barrie's characteristic phrase, they might hear the Gospel properly preached.

From the farm the future author of "The Raiders," went to the little school at Lawrieston, at which tradition says he was a somewhat irregular and truant-playing scholar. About 1868 Mr. Crockett's family had to leave the farm and go to Castle - Douglas to reside in a little white house in a side street, which they occupy to this day.

There was an excellent school at Castle Douglas at that time called the Free Church Institution. The master was one to whom many have professed great obligations, the late John Cowper who died some years ago as Lecturer on English at Moray House, Normal College, in Edinburgh. Mr. Crockett was pupil teacher in this school for some years, teaching privately as well as in the evening in the houses of the burghesses.

In 1876 Mr. Crockett came to Edinburgh University, having obtained a good bursary. He was then hardly sixteen, and he remained there for some years. He then went abroad to travel first with one pupil and then with another, in time taking in the whole of Europe, with parts of North Africa and Asia.

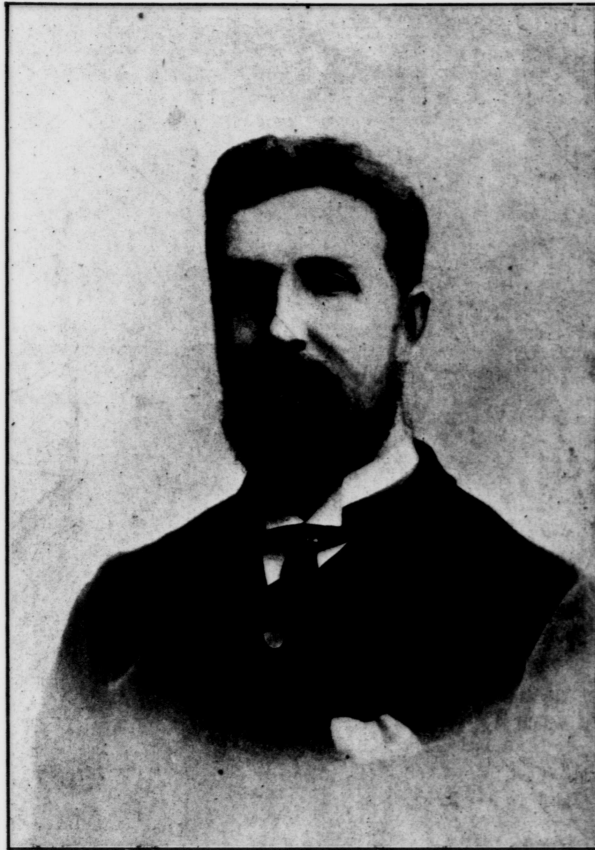
During the whole of this time from 1885 onwards, Mr. Crockett wrote verses on all subjects, which appeared duly in various Scottish papers. Most of these were collected into a volume of verse issued by Messrs. Kegan, Paul, Trench and Co., under the title of 'Dulce Cor,' the poems of Ford Bereton. This book bore date, 1886, but was really ready a year before. A very scarce little pamphlet was also published by Mr. David Douglas, of Edinburgh, but apparently no copies were ever sold.

Mr. Crockett went to Penicuik in 1886 immediately after completing his theological course, and has remained minister of that little hillside village ever since. In 1887 he

married the daughter of George Milner, author of 'Country Pleasures' and 'Studies on the Coast of Arran.'

The 'Stickit Minister' was begun casually in 1891, previous to which the author had written no prose, finished in 1892, and published in March, 1893. It has since gone through six editions. 'The Raiders' was written from old Galloway traditions and most of the incidents are perfectly true. Captain Yawkins was the quite real name of a quite real character. His cramming of his wig into a great gun and shooting it on board his pursuer, which has been variously represented as having been copied from Scott, from Stevenson, and from Charles Reade, actually took place at

the mouth of the Dee. Much of the story is familiar to every student of Galloway traditions, and Mr. Crockett's true *Quellen* may be found in a rough but precious volume of 'Galloway Legends,' published by William Nicholson at Kirkcudbright, about 1840. Still more must have been derived from old dwellers in the wild uplands about the "springs of Dee." Few books are less original than 'The Raiders' in so far that almost every prominent incident has been taken from contemporary sources, and in the main is true. Joseph Train supplied Scott with much of the information about the Galloway gypsies, to be found in that admirable "Additional Note of Galwegian Localities and personages which have been supposed to be alluded to



MR. S. R. CROCKETT.

in the word," which seems, most strangely, wholly to have escaped the attention of critics of 'The Raiders.' Scott, who was ignorant of Galloway, obtained all his material from the 'Castle Douglas Exciseman,' and in this interesting chapter we have with fair accuracy the stories of Captain Yawkins and his lugger *The Black Prince*, the fight with the two cutters, the incident of the wig, the lingtownmen, the smugglers, the great caird, Willie Marshall, the Faas of Yetholm, and the king of the gypsies. But much more may also be found in the scarce 'Life of Train' and in his invaluable and delightful 'History of the Isle of Man,' in reading which it is very instructive to compare the actual status and history of the Galloway smugglers and gypsies, with the treatment of them in Mr. Crockett's fiction.