

ism; and if he is at all to be forgiven for writing those dull poems called severally "At the Polo Ground" and "In Carey's Footsteps," it is on the score of having, in fine prose and finer poetry, throughout his life bravely agitated for the revival of Irish studies and for the recognition of Irish greatness. There is a noticeable figure in the niche which is first on the right-hand at the entrance of the English House of Lords. It is the effigy of an Irish prelate, one of the Barons whose names appear as witnesses to Magna Charta, and to Samuel Ferguson belongs the credit of its holding that niche. There are many niches in the House of Poets which are still vacant. Had I plantation of this isle, and were the King on't, I would put in a foremost of these niches the effigy of the Irish poet who wrote in the language of Shakspeare *The Lays of the Western Gael*.

ELSA D'ESTERRE-KEELING.

TWO SCOTTISH NOVELS.

Cleg Kelly. By S. R. Crockett. (Smith, Elder & Co.)

Robert Urquhart. By Gabriel Setoun. (Bliss, Sands & Foster.)

Cleg Kelly is by far the best work Mr. Crockett has yet produced—the book which shows most clearly that he has the supreme story-teller's gift of a vigorous, resourceful, and genuinely creative imagination. Not only so; but it is out of sight the ablest and richest story of gamin life that has appeared in our time—the story that recalls most readily *Oliver Twist* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. And I say this, in spite of many marks of haste in the book, in spite of certain farcicalities which approach perilously near to vulgarity, and, above all, in spite of the melodramatic and fantastically unreal episode of General Theophilus Ruff. Mr. Crockett would be well advised to give up his habit of making certain of his characters laugh on the most serious occasions, and to abandon certain mild Rabelaisianisms of the too familiar "hinterlands" type. No doubt such Rabelaisianisms are correctly associated with "the Sooth Back" of Edinburgh, and those Galloway byres that are consecrated to a love that is not always tepidly respectable. But as Mr. Crockett could not reproduce all these in their appalling entirety on this side of the Channel, and hardly even on the other, he should have left them alone. But here fault finding ends. What is most notable in *Cleg Kelly*, what distinguishes it from almost all other novels that have recently been published, is the fact that its keynote is the joy in living, which redeems such a life as Gavroche's or Cleg's. Cleg probably inherits this in equal measure from his good Scotch mother (who under other and happier circumstances might have become such a wife and mother as Margaret Carlyle), and from his father, who, drunken, weasel-faced Irishman though he is—burglar in *esse* and murderer in *posse*—has yet all the full-blooded nomad's ecstasies. You see Cleg "evolving" by degrees and inevitably from the criminality of his home, from which, in the first place, he is in a sense happily

repelled by seeing and revenging the murder of his mother, through the mild Bohemianism of the Knuckledusters' Club and his comic defiance of the Deity, into the respectability of a newsboy's life, and, finally, into the middle-class respectability in which of necessity the wealthy heir of General Theophilus Ruff lives and moves. Yet Cleg never loses his fundamentally rebellious virility: he dominates the book from first to last, and, as Kit Kennedy learns to his cost, can fight even in the country with the skill and strength of the "Sooth Back." The Kavanagh family is quite as well drawn as that of the Kellys. Perhaps Sal, the mother, is a trifle too much of an "awfu' woman," too obviously intended as a mate worthy of Tim Kelly. But Vara and Boy Hugh, and Cleg's jealousy of Vara, are perfect in their different ways. The railway episodes have rather the look of being dragged in; and there is a little playing to the religious gallery in the death of Muckle Alick. Yet Mr. Crockett is to be commended for having done justice to a life of peril that often ends in tragedy, which has hitherto been celebrated too infrequently by the "Surfaceman," who, if he chose, could easily be the first among Scotch poets. The love-making, not only of Cleg, but of Cleaver's Boy, and of that sheepishly conventional specimen of the Edinburgh middle-class, Donald Iverach, is managed lightly and artistically. In this respect Mr. Crockett has made an enormous advance upon *The Lilac Sunbonnet*. Finally, *Cleg Kelly* is full of a humour, the simple fidelity of which to nature makes one forget its exuberance—makes one even forgive Mr. Crockett for the preposterous General Ruff with his coffin, his corpses, and his jars filled with sovereigns. Mr. Crockett can only improve on *Cleg Kelly* as Cleg improved upon himself.

With *Robert Urquhart* the author of "Barncraig" and "Sunshine and Haar" steps at once into the ranks of Scottish novelists and into an independent position. Although he may have been tempted to write by the success of Mr. Barrie, he cannot be reckoned an imitator of *The Little Minister*, or even of *A Window in Thrums*. Still more independent is he of Mr. Crockett—of the Mr. Crockett who has written *Cleg Kelly* even more than of the Mr. Crockett who wrote *The Raiders*. He stands indeed midway between Annie Swan and Mr. Crockett, having set himself above all things to be a simple Scotch narrator of genuine Scotch possibilities. There is nothing either heroic or eccentric about his hero. Robert Urquhart is but a young teacher—somehow the word "dominie" does not appear to fit him—who falls in love with the pretty girl in the Scotch country village, in which he secures an uncongenial situation as instructor in "the Code," and whom he marries after he has made a footing of some sort in London journalism. The pettinesses associated with such a position are admirably brought out. There is, in particular, a sharp-tongued, mischief-making school-mistress (who ultimately and appropriately marries Urquhart's clumsy and vindictive

rival) who is almost fit to enter the immortal company of Mrs. Mailsetter, Mrs. Heukbane, and Mrs. Shortcake. Of Urquhart's friends, his more or less literary and artistic chums who play at Bohemian club life in Edinburgh are greatly inferior to the acquaintances he makes in King Kelvie, more especially truth-loving, sin-hating Rob Buchan and loyal Wattie Spence. Gabriel Setoun ought really to have spared us some of the extravagances of Sandy Grant. Elsie Austin is, in spite of her birth, but an ordinary example of the sweet, fairly cultured country girl who is certain to get married happily; and her father, the Rev. Niel Gordon, is an impossibility. No divinity student in Scotland would venture to get licensed, much less become a popular Evangelical minister, who knew that at some moment the fact of his having seduced a girl could be brought home to him. The other characters, however, are all excellent. The inevitable pathos is not overdone. It is represented by Michael and Marg'ret Downie, who have a ne'er-do-well son. Marg'ret dies before she knows of that son's disgrace, and after her death the lad—to whom Gabriel Setoun is far kinder than is Mr. Barrie to the son from London—has the grace to repent and reform. Altogether, *Robert Urquhart* indicates in its author a power and resource that could not have been suspected from his previous work, good, careful, and thoroughly real though that was.

WILLIAM WALLACE.

"CHIPS FROM A GERMAN WORKSHOP." New Edition. Vol. IV., *Essays on Mythology and Folk-lore*. By F. Max Müller. (Longmans.)

In a powerfully written preface, the eminent searcher in the domain of language fixes his mythological standpoint with such eclectic liberality as to win the consent of all who do not go by a cast-iron rule. He says:

"Mythology is like an enormous avalanche of ancient thought that has carried down with it not only snow and ice, but rocks, trees, plants, and animals, nay, even many fragments of human handiwork. . . . Nothing is more natural, therefore, than that each explorer should have his attention attracted by one class of objects, made ready for his inspection, and closely connected with his own studies. . . . That there is hardly a mythology without solar myths, who would deny? That there is hardly anything else in mythology, who would affirm? . . . There is room for all of us in the immense goldfields of mythology, both ancient and modern, both savage and civilised, both solar and lunar. We have read of zoological and botanical mythology, and we might have equally useful works on astronomical, on religious, nay, even on philosophical mythology. To me every new contribution is welcome. . . . That there are historical ingredients also in mythology, who could deny after studying the legend of Buddha, the exploits of Herakles, or the Saga embodied in the Nibelungenlied?"

By way of illustration, the author shows, in the case of Cyrus, how largely a Nature myth is at the bottom of tales connected with his name. But he adds:

"Yet, for all that, Cyrus was a real man."