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+ Authors and their Works. +

J. M. BARRIE.



In his native Thrums, yclept Kirriemuir, Mr. Barrie is looked upon with a kind of mingled pride and pity. "Poor James!" they say, "he had to tak' to writin' books. He was aye that delicate." James in his turn has so far pitied the people of Thrums that he has contrived to make them interesting and even lovable. Assuredly it needed a genius to achieve that result. If you had met these Auld Lichts of Mr. Barrie's in the flesh, you would have found them as rigid as cast-iron, as dogged as mules, as narrow-visioned as a horse with blinders. A teacupful of iron-nerved and leather-hearted saints, saved out of a lost and ruined universe: that is how they have been described, and with tolerable accuracy. Evidently there was no laughter in the Auld Licht Thrums; and if the children there had not a hard time, one is curious to know how they protected themselves. Even Mr. Barrie himself has been described as "too solemn even for a minister." But Mr. Barrie, when it comes to Thrums, can see things that to the common man are as imperceptible as the inhabitants of the planet Mars. He can see into the hearts of the people, and through that pathos of his which, far more than his humour, is his best quality as an artist he has transfigured these humble humdrum lives into pictures which bring the tears to our eyes even in our most critical moods.

Take "A Window in Thrums," which, all things considered, is still Mr. Barrie's best book. The homely pathos of that work is at times almost too much for the feelings. On a small scale and on a humble stage we are

brought face to face with sorrow cheerfully endured, the paltry and yet horrible misery of the rude pressure of life upon hidden sores, the heroism of broken hearts. There is no doubt, as a writer has said, that a pathetic effect is gained by the simple fact that it is by humble folk, of whom the great world is disdainfully ignorant, that we find those virtues expressed which have made heroic the most lovable names in history. We are not prepared for such beautiful acts of unselfishness, which are yet, if we only knew, so much more characteristic of the poor than of the rich, such tender fortitude in circumstances so humble and untoward, such touching thankfulness for the most meagre mercies of life. To show us these without exaggeration, without any of those unnecessary touches which heighten the effect in the same way that powder and paint heighten the complexion, an artist is required. Mr. Barrie respects not only the depth of feeling of his men and women, but also their awkward shyness and imperfect sympathies. When he is pursuing a humorous way he may be truthful or not, but whenever there is sorrow in the air he will not diverge a hair's-breadth from the truth.

Mr. Barrie's biography is soon told. Born at Kirriemuir, in Forfarshire, in 1860, he attended school there, and afterwards spent five years at Dumfries Academy. Subsequently he went to Edinburgh University, and graduated M.A. in 1882. He does not seem to have been one of the students of whom professors say that they have the world at their feet. At Dumfries the girls used to keep a "Querists' Album," and to this day the record stands that Mr. Barrie's

"pet aversion" was the Academy bell. At Edinburgh, again, he does not appear to have had any passion for knowing that when circles or triangles attempt impossibilities it is absurd; and as was an unknown quantity he was ever content to "walk round about." Leaving the University, he took at once to journalism. He went to London with the young man's ignoble ambition of making £1000 a year, and he made it—all except £900. He first became known by his sketches of Kirriemuir life, first in the *St. James' Gazette*, and afterwards in a religious weekly which pretends to have "discovered" him. By-and-by he put his name to one or two feeble books, such as "Better Dead," and "When a Man's Single"; then we had "Auld Licht Idylls" and "A Window in Thrums," and Mr. Barrie's fame was established. "The Little Minister," his latest novel, is but a moderate success. It is full of delightful scenes, humorous and pathetic, and the story runs smoothly enough; but there are many improbabilities in it, and in reading it one has always the feeling that Mr. Barrie could do so much better. "Walker, London" and "The Professor's Love Story" of course everybody has seen on the stage. This connection of Mr. Barrie with the theatre is a thing about which Kirriemuir has not made up its mind; on the whole, however, Thrums would much rather that James should continue to write books and leave the theatre severely alone. For a long time the Kirriemuir people believed, and some indeed still believe, that in London Mr. Barrie is an editor. Accordingly, when on a visit to the place just before beginning "The Little Minister," and questioning old people as to the sect whose preachers had the smallest stipends, he was popularly supposed to have been sent down by Mr. Gladstone (who has, so they think, the London editors under his foot) to collect information to be used in drawing up a Bill for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Kirk. Such is fame!

Mr. Barrie is now married, and is evidently leading a quiet life. We have been looking for something from him for a long time now. He has already given us "When a Man's Single"; let him follow up with "When a Man's Married." It is too bad that that high-falutin' imitator of his, Mr. S. R. Crockett, should be having it all his own way, to say nothing of of "Ian Maclaren," the kail-yard man.

COL. PHIPPS'S "Lives of the Marshals of Napoleon," upon which he has been engaged for many years, is now approaching completion, and is to be issued by Messrs. Bentley.

At the request of the editor of the *Century Magazine*, Mr. Gosse has put together his personal recollections of R. L. Stevenson, ranging over nearly a quarter of a century. These reminiscences will appear in an early number of the magazine.

THE greatest sympathy is felt with Mr. Leslie Stephen upon the loss of his accomplished and beautiful wife. Mrs. Stephen's kindness to the sick and poor was proverbial, and out of her experience grew her excellent little volume "Notes from Sick-rooms," which Messrs. Smith & Elder published some years ago.

MR. W. M. ROSSETTI, as executor and legatee of Miss Christina Rossetti, proposes to sell off pretty soon a portion of her small library and other effects. Among the books are several items having a certain personal or family interest. The books and some other things are likely to be sold by auction at Messrs. Sotheby's.

THE late Gustav Freytag is said to have left the sum of one million marks, besides some landed property, a fortune quite unprecedented for a German author. Several German papers eulogize him highly as an excellent man of business, a talent which will explain his great success with the glorification of the counting-house in his novel "Soll und Haben."

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