

a tale which enforces good doctrine and, by force of the author's temperament, excites high emotions on the way.

MR. CROCKETT'S LOVE IDYLLS.*

This dainty little volume seems to me to "prove nothing" except that Mr. Crockett's hand as a pure lyricist has lost its cunning, though ever so slightly, and that he should devote a year or at least six months to the production of a successor—which need not, however, be a sequel—to "Cleg Kelly." The best story in this collection is also the slightest and least idyllic—"The Love Story of Captain Ebenezer Grubb, S.A." Grubb has nothing of the masterful shrewdness of Cleg Kelly, and Eva Coles is a silly, selfish thing who likes a sweetheart and a ring, but does not "know what love is." Yet the slender and matter-of-fact pathos of their story is genuine. It shows, too, Mr. Crockett at his best as a phrase-maker and realistic reproducer of the pettinesses of average conversation. "Placards whose religious outspokenness struck the uninitiated with a thrill of pain" is true in art, and, as an exhibition of envious contempt, "Tis a fine thing to be able to traipse about pompommin' in the mid of the day when other folk be a-workin'." is true to life. Although the muse of the byre is not seen to such advantage in these idylls as in "Lads' Love," there is true Scottish, Gallovidian, and terribly earnest coquetry in "Love among the Beech Leaves," Isobel McLurg, too, with her excellent mother-wit, saves the most ambitious story, "The Fitting of the Peats," from being irredeemably commonplace, although, as a Presbyterian Puritan, her father Ninian is as much of a caricature as are the elders in "The Little Minister," although Adrian Home does not even make a good walking gentleman, and although the *deus ex machina* Henry Pelham is the reverse of a historical personage. There is an abundance of Mr. Crockett's vigour as a battle-painter in "The Count and Little Gertrud"—the story of the convict gang somehow recalls "Midshipman Easy"—but the idyllic element is mere Lord-of-Burleighism, and rather poor at that. The tragedy of "Vernor the Traitor" presents a fresh aspect of the old "hill-folk" life, but the self-sacrifice at the close is too reminiscent of Sydney Carton. As for "Billiam" and "That Popish Parson Fellow," and the like, they have nothing specially to recommend them except their realisation of that modern muscular Christianity, which is equally ready with its fists and its tears, and which beyond all doubt Mr. Crockett sometimes makes provokingly attractive.

WILLIAM WALLACE.

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD'S NEW POEM.†

To the imagination of our race the Sea-saga makes irresistible appeal. Who has read of the wanderings of St. Brandan or the voyage of Maeldune—to go no further afield—without being conscious of the freshness and the wonder of the world's adventurous youth? Other, holding out to King Alfred the walrus-tooth in his brown hand as a proof of the truth of his strange story, is as unforgettable as Sir Humphrey Gilbert reading his book among the driving icebergs, or Salvation

* "Love Idylls." By S. R. Crockett. 5s. (London: John Murray. 1901.)

† "The Voyage of Ithobal." By Sir Edwin Arnold, K.C.I.E., C.S.I. 5s. net. (John Murray.)

Yeo with the romance of the New World etched on his white buffalo horn. It is not surprising therefore that Sir Edwin Arnold should have perceived epical possibilities in the brief and much-discussed passage in which Herodotus tells how Neco, King of Egypt, "sent certain Phœnicians in ships" to sail round the unknown shores of Africa and to return home by the Pillars of Hercules.

The subject catches the attention; and the poet sets out, gallantly enough, to tell how Ithobal, allured by the silver dove of Ishtar, entered the slave-market of Tyre just in time to purchase Nesta, the wondrous Libyan maiden, with his one pearl,

"Fished on a moonlit night by the Isle of Birds,
A moon itself,"

and so set his feet in the ways to which the high gods had destined him. For Nesta had been born under alien stars, far beyond the springs of Nile, and for her the unexplored seas beyond Punt were no mysterious wastes of terror and death, but honest brine washing lands fairer even than Syria and Egypt. When, therefore, Pharaoh Neco sent to Tyre for stout mariners to take his ships through

"the dark seas
Nether of nethermost, and past
the bounds
Where boldest oar hath dipped,"

Ithobal was eager to take service, and Nesta went with him.

With such romantic chances to the poet's hand, "The Voyage of Ithobal," one feels, ought to have been a notable, if not a great work; but it must be acknowledged, however regretfully, that the achievement falls far below the opportunity. Of this expedition of Neco, supposing it to be historical, no record survives beyond the few lines in Herodotus, but it would not have been difficult, had the poet willed, to reproduce the spirit and temper of the age from the legends and travellers' tales that have come down to us. It was an age that believed in dog-faced mortals, in tribes that warred with the south wind, in colossal ants whose hills were heaped with gold-dust, in

"Anthrophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders."

The Africa which Ithobal discovers, however, is the Africa of the absolutely up-to-date geographer. The narrative from this point of view is one long anachronism, crowded with uncouth place-names, and notes on natural history written in the light of modern science. In the Periplus of Hanno, with its naive horror of the leagues of mysterious fire at night and its wonder at the wild men and women (some of whose skins were carried back to Carthage), we catch a glimpse of the real adventurers of the ancient time. In this "Voyage of Ithobal" the "wild men" become mere "gorillas"; and in a passage (p. 74), which suggests a page of Henry Drummond, Nesta makes it clear that the protective mimicry of insects is quite familiar to her.

A more serious fault than anachronism is the lack of human interest. There is no passionate intention, no growing and culminating design. Mere incidents, of course, are not wanting, but they do not impart the pleasure of novelty; and while they help to fix attention on Nesta, they sadly disparage Ithobal. For "a master of the sea," an eminent sea-dog who was equally familiar with Tarifa and Bab-el-Mandeb, Ithobal is a curiously inept and resourceless seafarer. Nesta



ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, FROM THE MEDALLION BY
A. ST. GAUDENS.

"The medallion has been at last triumphantly transported up the hill and placed over my smoking-room mantelpiece. It is considered by everybody a first-rate, but flattering, portrait. We have it in a very good light, which brings out the artistic merits of the god-like sculptor to great advantage. As for my own opinion, I believe it to be a speaking likeness, and not flattered at all; possibly a little the reverse."—The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson.