

to ingenuous youth, and leads many to find lasting joy in literature or in history. The only regret in reading it is that it seems to have hastened the end of one of the most distinguished figures in our literature. MARCUS DODS.

DANIEL DEFOE.*

The new life of Defoe is a disappointing book. The diligence of the writer, his conscientiousness, his scrupulous regard for historical accuracy, are indeed deserving of the highest praise. He has hunted through parish registers and searched the libraries for references to Defoe and his family. He has interviewed the descendants of the author of Robinson Crusoe. He has made full use of the unpublished letters of Defoe that are in the British Museum. The pity of it is that whilst possessing some of the necessary qualifications of the ideal biographer, he has proved himself utterly unable to make a proper use of the mass of material that he has gathered together. His book is, for the most part, a mere collection of facts; and its author is quite unable to fulfil the promise that he makes in the preface, to present us with "a man of flesh and blood," to make the real Defoe stand before us. Moreover, notwithstanding his praiseworthy industry, the discoveries that Mr. Wright has made are few in number and of no great importance. He has unearthed some unpublished letters by Defoe, but these add but little to our knowledge of their writer. He has proved that the home of the Foes was Etton, not Elton, in Northamptonshire. He has succeeded in making one or two slight corrections in the list of Defoe's works compiled by the painstaking Mr. Lee.

Defoe's latest biographer is deficient above everything else in critical power. "To see the object as in itself it really is,"—this is not his aim. He is convinced that it is his first duty as a biographer to point out "the moral of Defoe's life"; and he is continually on the look out for opportunities for indulging in commonplace moralizings. But although Mr. Wright is unable to give us any sound criticism of his own, either of Defoe's personality or of his works, he is wise enough to make lengthy and frequent extracts from the writings of Mr. Saintsbury, Mr. A. B. Walkley, and the late Professor Minto. In fact, throughout the whole course of his work, he constantly uses paste and scissors. He succeeds, however, in his preface, in giving utterance to one statement of striking originality. In spite of the fact that on almost every page of his book it is possible to find evidence to the contrary, he solemnly asserts that "Defoe was not a storyteller in both senses of the word." If in the rich and complex character of Defoe there was one feature that was more conspicuous than any other, it was his wonderful gift for "forging stories and imposing them on the world for truth." "He was," as Professor Minto asserted in the concluding chapter of his brilliant monograph, "a truly great liar." He was a liar in the grand style, perhaps the most consummate artist in lies that ever lived. Placed by the side of any one of his brilliant cycle of masterpieces, the inventions of Marco Polo and Sir John Mandeville, of Sir Kenelm Digby and Titus Oates seem to be but the crude performances of well-meaning amateurs. In the whole of human history he has but one serious rival in his own special branch of art, and that is the good Queen Elizabeth. Both the Cornhill merchant and the great daughter of Henry the Eighth adopted the maxims of the Florentine Secretary, who taught the world that a most necessary qualification for one who desires to be a leader amongst his fellow men is to be able to lie cleverly, to play the hypocrite well. Whether he is posing as a loyal Whig, whilst he is secretly in the pay of Harley, or editing a Tory journal in the interests of the Whig leaders; whether he is giving a true and authentic account of the great plague, or telling the story of "the blowing up of the island of St. Vincent;" whether he is writing "the Memoir of a Cavalier," or relating the exploits of Dominique Cartouche—in all his varied occupations he shows the same remarkable capacity. His "natural infirmity of homely, plain writing," his constant references to trustworthy authorities, the righteous indignation he showed against those writers who endeavoured to gull a too credulous public, the profound respect he always displayed for the pet virtues of the English bourgeoisie—all

lent to his most daring fabrications an air of verisimilitude. It was, for the most part, to the possession of this unique power that he owed his success as a journalist and as a writer of fiction. "He was never grieved for lack of matter," says Professor Minto, "and had no nice ideas about manner, and was sometimes sore about the superior respectability of those who had." Were he alive to-day, we should find him, no doubt, at the head of that class of critics who speak with contempt of the "mandarinism" of Matthew Arnold and of "the higher Podsnappery" of Pater. His idea of "a good writer" was one who knew what the public wanted, and who gave it them. He regarded literature, in fact, as a trade, not as an art; and "Robinson Crusoe" and "Moll Flanders" were as much pot-boilers as are the novels of Ohnet, or the pictures of some popular Academicians. His splendid literary gifts alone raised his work above the level of mediocrity. To his great resourcefulness, his restless inventive activity, we owe the origination or the development of several important features in modern journalism, such as the leading article, the practice of interviewing, the society paper. He was, too, the prince of log-rollers. "He wrote letters to himself," as Mr. Wright himself tells us, "saying that his paper 'was the best and most sensible of all newspapers';" he referred to himself as 'the well-known Daniel Defoe';" he reviewed his own books anonymously, "praising them to the skies." "If it answered his purpose, he corrected himself, quoted himself, vituperated himself."

But, notwithstanding his many failings, there is enough for the moralist to admire in Defoe's strangely complex character without endowing him with imaginary virtues. Like Machiavelli, he was "an enigma, a grotesque assemblage of incongruous qualities," a wonderful combination of knave and patriot. Like Machiavelli, he desired that his country should be united and free, and to secure that end he worked with indomitable energy and patience.

Mr. Wright's book does not realize our expectations of it; but he deserves our thanks for his persevering endeavours to throw some fresh light on a unique and interesting personality.

R. L. DOUGLAS.

THE LILAC SUNBONNET.*

It seems to us but a few weeks ago since we had the pleasure of reading Mr. Crockett's 'Raiders.' And now the result of another "raid" is in the hands of the reading public. In his former book the author took his readers into the wilds of Galloway, till then *terra incognita* to the outside world. He made us acquainted with the wild race of gypsies—the Faas and the Marshalls, the Rob Roys of the Southern Highlands, who, secure in the fastnesses of the rough glens, made a raid from time to time and despoiled the more peaceful and law-abiding inhabitants of the plains below. The book was full of fascination, and the descriptions so breathing the spirit of grey hills and deep glens that the reader laid down the story only to feel the spell still remaining. In 'The Lilac Sunbonnet' Mr. Crockett again takes his readers to the same happy hunting ground, but the period of the story is less remote than that of 'The Raiders.' Once more we have the healthy breath of winds sweeping the gray hillside, the same still dark nights with stars reflected in the bosom of lochs and rivers, the moan or whisper of trees, storm and witchery of sunlight—in short, all that endears Galloway to the true Gallovidian. In this new book of Mr. Crockett's what strikes us most is the infinite charm of the pictures he describes. The author has a keen perception of the beauties of landscape, and an eye quick to note all the variety of change in the lights and shadows that come and go on hillside and mountain. The story itself is truly a love story, and the author has given us, in the character of the heroine, Winsome Charteris, as fine a portrait as can be met with in the whole range of fiction. The story is a series of little idylls, each full of exquisite descriptions of rural life and its manners and customs. We are not stretching our praise too far when we venture to name Mr. Crockett a Scotch Theocritus in prose. And here we would instance such chapters as "The Love Song of the Mavis," "Midsummer Dawn," "The

* 'The Life of Daniel Defoe,' By Thomas Wright. (Cassell and Co., Ltd.)

* 'The Lilac Sunbonnet,' By S. R. Crockett, author of 'The Raiders,' etc. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1894.)

Dark of the Moon at the Grannoch Bridge," and others in which the descriptions are masterly, and true to the very heart of the things written about. Ralph Peden, the hero of the story, is the son of Gilbert Peden, the Metropolitan Marrow minister who resides in James's Court, Edinburgh, and is sent by his father to his old friend, Allan Welsh, minister of the Marrow Kirk in Dullarg. And here the story opens and the wearer of the lilac sunbonnet steps in to play sad havoc with the note-books, commentaries, and Hebrew lexicon of the young student who comes to the Manse of Dullarg to prepare his trial sermon, for he is the hope of the people of the Marrow faith. No wonder that he neglected his studies—here is the portrait of Winsome Charteris: "Fair hair, crisping and tendrilling over her brow, swept back till caught close behind her head by a tiny ribbon of blue—then, again escaping, it went scattering and wavering over her shoulders wonderingly, like nothing on earth but Winsome Charteris' hair . . . eyes which, emulating the parish poet, we can only describe as like two blue waves when they rise just far enough to catch a sparkle of light on their crests. The subject of her mouth, though a tempting one, we refuse to touch. It has already wrecked three promising reputations." Into the story itself we do not propose to enter. But we cannot lay down the book without drawing attention to the Farm Town of Craig Ronald, and the sad, pathetic figure of Walter Skirving, a cavalier Puritan, sitting there, powerless though still erect and firm, gazing through the window on the far-away Galloway hills, and dreaming of many things and saying little, though the old fires still smoulder in his heart. We consider this the finest thing in 'The Lilac Sunbonnet'—a story which is sure to add to the fame of its author, and to raise high hopes for the next volume from his pen.

ALEXANDER ANDERSON.

A HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL.*

Professor Raleigh's book is interesting both as a good thing in itself and as a sign of a growing standard of excellence in the books that feed a popular educational movement—for it is one of Mr. Murray's University Extension Manuals. There is little, however, in its tone to suggest the text-book; its orderliness and its completeness—the latter within the limits imposed by its size—are the only marks that it has been made with a view to providing convenient information. Readers may therefore throw aside prejudices against manuals in the case of this particularly bright, particularly readable little history, for, apart from its excellence as a survey, it contains an unusual amount of intelligent literary criticism. To students, as distinct from general readers, there are few books—I hardly know of one within text-book boundaries—that contains so good a substitute for the inspiring personal note of sympathy which is the special gift of a good lecturer.

Beginning with the earliest romances, and extending to the publication of 'Waverley,' it can hardly be said to omit clear definite reference to any work of importance. What may be called the hereditary method has been adhered to throughout, each novelist being clearly connected with his artistic fathers and children; but there has been no undue straining of ingenuity to place each one in a family. Doubtless Professor Raleigh owes many suggestions to M. Jussierand, to whom he makes several grateful references. That appreciative French critic of our literature has gone over a great part of the same ground, not only in his account of the English Novel before Shakespeare, but in his slighter and less known essays, "Le Roman Anglais—Origines et Formation des Grandes Ecoles de Romanciers," and "Le Roman Anglais et la Réforme Littéraire de Daniel Defoe;" but while fully acknowledging the rare combination in M. Jussierand of erudition and charm, he has one fault which now and again weakens our value of his judgment, a tendency to make too much of interesting but trivial and accidental points. This his English follower has avoided. Professor Raleigh's book is that of a lover rather than of a professor of literature. Indeed, the personal note in it is very audible. He has taken up no cold

attitude of impartiality, but very frankly lets his sympathies shine through, and as these are healthy and catholic they add considerably to the interest while not decreasing the value. Only in a few cases does it occur to me that he might have done fuller justice to what does not specially appeal to him. A comparison of his criticisms of Richardson and Fielding will provide an illustration. But were this exaggerated, it would still be better than the conventional praise and dispraise, the dry superficiality of most writers with so little space at their command as Professor Raleigh. The literary qualities of the book are proved by nothing more than the fact that he has over and over again in a short paragraph, given a portrait lifelike and first-hand, showing not only intimate knowledge of facts and features, but profound insight into character. Few writers have had more commonplaces written about them than Dr. Johnson; but it is worth while reading this newest criticism, the result of which will be to send not a few of us back to 'Rasselas' to revise our judgments by the light of Professor Raleigh's sympathetic description—which is not even altogether spoiled by such a phrase as "inspissated tenebrosity."

It seems to me he has only once gone seriously wrong, and by the perilous path of comparative criticism. Every one knows Macaulay's comparison between Jane Austen and Shakespeare. There was not much in it, though it has been quoted a hundred times, but it is repeated here with aggravation: "Of the two, Shakespeare, eternally susceptible to temptation by a gleam of poetry, exhibits the less majestic calm. He can hardly be content for long with the supremacy of an inferior kingdom." To this one only says, Of course. But he continues, quoting from Mr. Goldwin Smith: "The hand which drew Miss Bates, though it could not have drawn Lady Macbeth, could have drawn Dame Quickly or the nurse in 'Romeo and Juliet.'" Of this, one may have the strongest doubts; but Professor Raleigh continues, in his own words, "The same hand, had it attempted the description of the murder of the little princes in 'Richard III., would never have slipped into the poetic metaphor that gives to Shakespeare's hired assassins so unreal an air." The criticism of Shakespeare is just; the rest is idle, because Miss Austen would never have made such an attempt, and it is vain talking about it. It is rare that he loses his way so far.

The style is bright, rapid, with many epigrammatic touches. He has contrived to make his book eminently readable, not only by his unusual intimacy with his subject, but because he has thought it worth while to put good literary work into it. One other thing may be noted. Those who write of our older literature often show evidence of imperfect sympathy with, or very perfect ignorance of, recent literary developments. The theme here is not the literature of the day, but Professor Raleigh is plainly a modern, and all the better guide for moderns to the genius and the beauties of the older books. G-Y.

THE VAGABONDS.*

All Mrs. Woods' stories after her first have to stand a severe test, the test of comparison with 'A Village Tragedy.' It is a great responsibility to have written an excellent book, and those who have done so would perhaps do well to keep silence ever after. But their frequent imprudence is our not infrequent gain, and though 'Esther Vanhomrigh' and 'The Vagabonds' are imperfect judged by the standard of Mrs. Woods's possibilities, they have excellencies of a high order. Especially is this the case with the more recent story. But putting aside 'The Village Tragedy,' and judging 'The Vagabonds' on its own merits, before reaching a due and fitting appreciation of it another obstacle stands in our way, an obstacle connected with the subject. The clowns, and Amazons, and tumblers of a travelling circus are the *dramatis persone* and the scenes are constantly moving ones, in tent and waggon, village inn and hall. Hardly has the novel opened, then, than the reader's mind and memory are off to greet again other well-remembered tales where the ever-fascinating life of the road is pictured in a similar fashion as looked at through the eyes of just such travelling enter-

* 'The English Novel: Being a Short Sketch of its History from the Earliest Times to the Appearance of "Waverley."' By Walter Raleigh. 3s. 6d. (John Murray.)

* 'The Vagabonds.' By Margaret L. Woods. 6s. (Smith and Elder.)