

have a portrait, surely the only alternative is idealism: a portrait of someone else is no better than a lie.

"How thankful I am," said a worshipper of Swinburne once to me, "that Mary Queen of Scots lived before the age of portrait painting! One is thus enabled to think of her as the embodiment of one's own ideal of feminine loveliness, and can afford to laugh at the ghastly efforts of her contemporaries to put her charms on record."

There never was, or could have been, a portrait of Christ as He lived; the desirability of trying to depict Him at all is part of a totally different question; yet, as George Herbert so shrewdly said,—

"A verse will find him who a sermon flies,"

and it seems certain that the divine work of Raphael must have acted as a revelation to thousands to whom in other ways the light might never have come. Holbein's message may have been as convincing to the men and women of his day: but it is certain that now it will be appreciated only by the few who understand; while of Raphael's, the mind can scarcely picture the gazer who would not be constrained to cry,—

"It is the thing! So such things should be!
Behold Madonna, I am bold to say!"

Books of the Week.

TWO NEW KEYNOTES.*

"THE Mountain Lovers" is a Celtic romance that is full of weird pathos, charm and improbability, but it is written in very melodious prose, and Miss Macleod is evidently steeped in Celtic folk lore. The picturesque scenery which forms the background of the Mountain Lovers is described by one who has lived closely in touch with Nature; the sound of the wind, the murmur and babble of the stream are full of delicate imaginings. The translations from the Gaelic, and the legendary aphorisms that are interspersed throughout the pages are well worthy of being rescued from oblivion. The Personality of God as He is conceived by the mountaineers who live beneath majestic Ben Tolair is very terrible, and the story is an extremely tragic one, but from first to last it is vague, dreamy and mysterious, and shows that the authoress read much of the pathetic and highly-strung poetry of the people of that race. In reading this book all these things must be taken into consideration, and the reader be content to lay aside his Philistine desire for realism or even probability in the story; but read in a right spirit, the prose poem of the Mountain Lovers should give him the same kind of joy as the song of a bird, the sound of the wind, or the sweet, wholesome scent of the soil. Nial, the fantastic dwarf, and one of the principal actors in the story, according to the local legends of his valley possessed no soul; like a wild and startled fawn, he is for ever creeping through the thickets and bracken, and peering into the pools of

the mountain streams in search of his soul. The story shows that in spite of the mysterious story of his birth he had a deeply sympathetic nature, for at one great crisis in his life when the blind foster father, who had been so harsh to him, was in his power, the story states that he "was tempted to make his late tormentor suffer; but the brute heart of the soulless man was melted because of the agony of one of the lords of life."

All the characters in the tale are inspired by the most delightfully primitive aspirations, and are afflicted by the simplest fears of life and death, yet all their emotions are outspoken in the most poetic and delightful language, and when Torcall Cameron was full of dread when he thought he had seen the dreaded vision of an *eilidriom* or death chariot, he called his daughter to him and whispered, "Sorcha, Sorcha, my soul swims in mist," and when Oona was afraid to escape down the grassy ledges from boulder to boulder towards the shelter of the forest, we are told that "inexplicable fear drove her like a whip." I wish I had space to quote the delightful scene when Oona first dances in the sunlight, and then bathes in the stream: the whole scene is full of poetry, the sound of falling water, and the childish naked beauty of the little mountain maiden. And I wish I had space to quote the milking song, which has evidently been rendered from the Gaelic by the authoress, and the song of the expectant mother, addressed to her unborn babe, for both these are full of an unforgettable charm.

The ending of the Mountain Lovers is sad indeed. "Strange had been their love, strange the coming of it; and stranger still was their joy in the hour of death;" but not vainly had they dreamed and loved, for the legacy that Sorcha left to her child was Joy; and when his wife sank dead upon the slope of the green grass, Alan raised her child above his dead, and uttered these proud, strong and brave words:—

"Behold, O God, this is Ivor, the son of Sorcha, that I boon unto Thee, to be for all the days that Thou shalt give him, Thy servant of Joy among men."

After filling oneself with the poetry of "The Mountain Lovers," it is a great come-down to peruse the dull and commonplace story of "The Woman Who Didn't." Miss Victoria Crosse's book, which she evidently intends as an answer to Mr. Grant Allen's "Woman Who Did," abounds in faults of taste and pert vulgarisms of style. The hero, who writes the tale autobiographically, was such a very odious young man, and was apparently so entirely devoid of the most primitive gentlemanly instincts, that we are not at all surprised to hear that the woman didn't; the temptation to desert her husband and embark on free love with the "Arry" of the story was too feeble for any Emma (I beg her pardon, her name I see was Euridyce) to succumb to. But after all we have heard too much in the past of the power of hereditary vice, so perhaps this little story may do good as illustrating the power of hereditary virtue. And after all is said and done, the women who don't are more true to life, and very much more abundant than the women who do. One could wish that a tale with such a virtuous moral had been less dull and commonplace.

A. M. G.

* "The Mountain Lovers," by Fiona Macleod. 3s. 6d. "The Woman Who Didn't," by Victoria Crosse. 3s. 6d. (John Lane, London, 1895.)

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