Literary News and Criticism.

A Study of George Washington as a Human Being.

THE SEVEN AGES OF WASHINGTON. A Biography. By Owen Wister. Illustrated. 12mo, pp. xv, 263. The Macmillan Company.

It is a curious fact that the life of Washington has never been really easy to write. His character had little that was subtle about it, and there were no mysteries in his career, yet one book about him after another has been given to the world only to leave the average American wondering why he does not possess a satisfactory portrait of the man. One well remembered reason for this unsatisfactory state of affairs is noted by Mr. Wister. "It was," he says, "in their foolish attempt to make of Washington what they imagined he ought to be—edifyingly superhuman—that his early biographers missed making him alive." Nearly all his biographers have thus missed their aim. They are not as blameworthy as they might seem to be to the superficial reader. After all, there *was* something "edifyingly superhuman" about Washington. He was a great man in the fullest sense of the term, and he successfully executed an heroic task. He had a grand nature, upon which his work left an extraordinary stamp. This much may be said, and should be said, in extenuation of his too stately biographers, early and late. It is impossible not to feel a certain sympathy for the historian who, in his treatment of Washington, errs on the side of loftiness. We may even distrust the tendency to a broader view of the subject, for in these days of cold "science," when authors are fain to go to the extremes of hero worship or iconoclasm in their blind devotion to the "document," the so-called truth is often apt to turn out quaintly misleading. But in these matters the character of the historian means everything. If we have the right man we may be sure of a good book. As regards the true Washington we have in Mr. Wister the right man.

"The Seven Ages of Washington" is scarcely more than an essay, but within its limits it gives a remarkable interpretation of its subject. It owes its merits not simply to the author's insight and sense of justice, qualities which might be found in other contributors to the literature of the Revolution. It owes much to the fact that Mr. Wister is a thinking American, whose reading of his country's history has been made the more profitable by the instinctive understanding which, perhaps, could only be possible to one of American blood. His narrative is tinged with a kind of manly gratitude. There is not a hint of spread-eagleism or sentimentality in the book, but from beginning to end it is plain that the author has been moved to the depths of him by his hero's worth, finding in the traditionally "cold" figure of Washington a type to touch the emotions as vividly as Napoleon touches them in even his most dramatic moments. He passes on his impression in a few chapters which gather up everyday traits as they come out in letters and other records. The salient events in Washington's career, military and political, are indicated rather than dwelt upon. The object of interest is always his character; the things placed in the foreground are the episodes, great or small, which show us that character in action or point to the sources of its development. Thus on the question of ancestry Mr. Wister lays stress upon the fact that Washington "was no meteoric phenomenon, falling into a family unheralded from the sky," but drew from his soldierly and clerical forefathers qualities strong and simple, fitting him as it were in normal fashion to take up his appointed task. He makes nothing romantic out of Washington's ancestry, as he seeks for nothing spectacularly prophetic in the period of his upbringing. In the chapter on Washington's boyhood he boldly places emphasis upon the influence of those now well known maxims in his copybook.

> Wear not your Cloths foul, unript, or dusty.
> Sleep not when others Speak, Sit not when others stand, Speak not when you should hold your Peace, walk not when others Stop.
> Labor to keep alive in your breast that little Spark of Celestial fire called Conscience.

Mr. Wister is careful not to underestimate the part that these precepts played in the moulding of Washington's character, for he sees that Washington took his copy-book seriously and that the good counsel of which we have cited some specimens "entered like leaven into that young lump of strength." He perceives, too, how important it was for Washington in his young manhood to enjoy the friendship of Lord Fairfax and to come into contact with the ladies of that nobleman's household. The pages devoted to the life at Belvoir are delightfully written; in a few brief touches they make us realize just how the clever lad was given his head in everything that meant a happy open-air activity, and at the same time was steadied and polished. His first military experiences are swiftly sketched, and in the midst of them the author pauses with excellent good judgment on matters bearing upon the familiar conception of Washington as a man having no humor. The point, Mr. Wister thinks, has been pushed too far, and he says:

> Let us provide him with no trait he does not himself disclose, but neither let us rob him of any. Early in this lamentable Braddock expedition he writes of an escort of eight men he had with him: "Which eight men were two days assembling, but I believe would not have been as many seconds dispersing if I had been attacked." And about this same time: "I have at last discovered . . . why Mrs. Wardrope is a greater favorite of General Braddock than Mrs. F——. . . . Nothing less, I assure you, than a present of delicious cake and potted woodcocks!" Washington had a sense of fun, could be on occasion sedately jocular, and also (as shall be seen) could be surprised into outbursts of hilarity as violent as his occasional outbursts of rage. His undoubtedly restricted sense of humor was of its day, eighteenth century; and a retort of Goldsmith's to Dr. Johnson, while they were discussing the doctor's ability to write a fable about little fish, might fit the Father of our Country well: "Why, doctor, you could never write a fable about little fish; you would make them talk like whales!"

More than once in the course of this biography Washington's lighter side is illustrated. The author shows, also, how this lighter side was generally overshadowed. "He was always," said one of his contemporaries, "dignified, and one stood a little in awe of him." But Mr. Wister, knowing that "a great man cannot do great things without in a way growing apart from his fellows," is alert to exhibit the essentially human poise which distinguished Washington, so that even to those who stood in awe of him he was not a demigod, but a man. Indeed, the effort on every page of this volume is to show the entire naturalness of his demeanor. His bashfulness in youth, which nevertheless did not keep him from carrying his heart from one unwilling fair to another; his love of life as a country gentleman at Mount Vernon; his half stern and half good natured treatment of his often exasperating servants; his indignation against mean spirited politicians and his devotion to his soldiers—all this is set forth with a zest for the revealing note in the specific incident and with an artistic purpose forcing each little fact to contribute to the broad effect of the whole. The value of the book consists largely in its placing of Washington in the right perspective. Mr. Wister's portrait of him is all of a piece.

He has drawn it, too, the more effectively because he has known what to leave out. He never labors a point. Though he is generous in quotations he is at pains to select only the fragments that will serve to illuminate the matter in hand. He has some capital notes on Washington's general culture. It was scant, so far as mere book learning went, but we are reminded of his fondness for letter writing, and, apropos of this, Mr. Wister has some interesting things to say on an important quality in the correspondence, sometimes neglected.

His brilliant contemporaries and colleagues not seldom shook their heads solemnly over his writing; but they need not have done so. They did so because his sagacity and moral weight so stood out during these distracting times that such gifted men as Jefferson and Hamilton fell dupe to a very human instinct—they wanted to find something which they could do better than he could, and they picked out his English style. They were quite mistaken. While these collateral fathers of the country could *spell* words better than Washington, *use* words better they could not. No better prose than his was written, when he took time to it. There are periods during the war (and periods afterward) when controlled passion or deep concern causes his language to reach the highest level of expression and dignity.

This book is a study of Washington in a very intimate sense, and, since it is so brief, the author has left himself little space in which to speak of the times and of other personages. Yet he is surprisingly skilful in enlivening his background and disclosing, if only through fleeting glimpses, something of the personal and other forces with which the commander and President had to deal. Occasionally, as in his remarks on Jefferson, the author lets himself go, but in the main he checks his pen at the proper moment. The background, like the portrait, is handled with perfect discretion. The reader who is searching for an authoritative biography of Washington, brief, and made humanly interesting from the first page to the last, will find it here.

M. HELLEU.

A Gallery of Beautiful Portraits from His Hand.

A GALLERY OF PORTRAITS. Reproduced from original etchings by Paul Helleu. With an introduction by Frederick Wedmore. Folio, pp. xxix. Longmans, Green & Co.

This is a charming gift book; one of the most charming we have seen in years. It is a "book of beauty," dedicated to modern femininity in some of its most piquant types. There are artists who are nothing if not children of their period, and M. Helleu is such an artist. He came into the world to interpret the grace and movement of twentieth century society, to be a master of *frou frou*. If his sitters have souls he is not especially concerned with the fact. What he cares for is the beauty of the senses, the pure line of a well rounded cheek, the elegance of a delicately columnar throat, the richness of cunningly piled masses of gleaming hair, and the art of the milliner triumphing over all. It is not poignantly touching, this material of his, but it is often bewitching, and sometimes it is lovely. We have it delightfully set forth in this large thin folio, containing remarkably fine reproductions of twenty-four portraits of women.

They are nearly all portraits of French women. The few exceptions are of American types. In a sense it scarcely matters where M. Helleu finds his sitter. We may be sure that in any case it will be in that fashionable world which, at bottom, is cosmopolitan. If this brilliant etcher recognizes any distinctive atmosphere in his not at all atmospheric studies, it is that of his native land. He Parisianizes all his models. Again we observe that it scarcely matters. The main point is that M. Helleu should draw the face of beauty with exquisite refinement, that he should frame it in a picturesque *coiffure*, and that by dint of only lightly indicating his sitter's shoulders, arms and hands he should produce as the total result a swift impression, incomparably vivacious and "smart."

He does this, as a rule, with a precision that constitutes half his charm, and therefore it is positively astonishing to find the first portrait in this collection presenting a nose for which we must decline to hold the sitter responsible. M. Helleu bungled, this time, and bungled hideously. It was the irony of fate, indeed, that placed this portrait in the forefront of his book. But he recovers himself immediately, and there is not one of the other portraits which fails to leave an impression of complete technical authority. We believe that M. Helleu has sometimes been compared with Watteau. The comparison is absurd. With the eighteenth century master glamour is everything, and of glamour, of soft, poetic feeling, M. Helleu is quite innocent. But if the rather brittle brilliance of our modern fashion has in it anything poetic, this etcher has expressed it. The Muse of the boudoir has in him a consummate interpreter.

AN INDIAN PRINCE.

Mr. Mason's New Novel of East and West.

THE BROKEN ROAD. By A. E. W. Mason. 12mo, pp. vi, 418. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Mr. Mason is one of those literary men in political life who really profit by their dual resource. Though he is a born teller of tales, a man who seems to exercise the narrative gift for its own sake, his experience in Parliament has undoubtedly fertilized his art and given a more serious turn to his literary ambition. That, at all events, is what is suggested by his latest book, "The Broken Road." Hitherto his work has been purely romantic. In stories like "Miranda of the Balcony," "The Four Feathers" and "Running Water," he has gone in chiefly for adventure, with a strong "love interest." Now he frames a novel which embodies some keen reflections on the administration of the British Empire in India, the ingenious plot having at its core a problem of significance to political students. He shows his cleverness in nothing more than in the adroitness with which he keeps this problem in subordination to the interest of the story as a story.

The broken road is one travelling toward the Hindu Kush, through a region whose warlike and treacherous population are inimical to its advance. One Andrew Linforth, an English officer, has set his heart upon the building of this road, believing that its completion is essential to the consolidation of British authority. But he has to leave his task unfinished, and so has another Linforth, who takes it up, the father of the young soldier whom Mr. Mason makes his hero. Ordinarily the trouble might perhaps have been settled in due course, with no very subtle complications, but it so happens that the son of the reigning Prince of Chiltistan—the territory across which the road strives in vain to fling itself—is sent as a child to be educated in England. It is this that throws the fat into the fire. One Englishman on the spot is wise enough to see that Shere Ali may prove tractable if brought up among his own kind, but will pretty certainly prove difficult if he is reared among white people. Unfortunately, this prophet dies, and the young Indian is sent across the sea. He is happy there, and becomes the devoted friend of Linforth, whom he meets at school. But incidentally he falls in love with an English woman, and from this episode in his career there flow all manner of dramatic events. The scene presently shifts to India, with Linforth and Shere Ali engaged in the work of men, and the question of the road is reopened under totally new conditions.

How it is settled we leave the reader to find out for himself. Mr. Mason works out his plot with a practised hand. He has evidently familiarized himself with the Indian character, and, while his sequence of incidents is arranged with professional solicitude for romantic and dramatic effect, he contrives it in such wise as to make the whole fabric unfold with the natural progress of Shere Ali through the crises of a soul at war with itself. This young prince has every wish to be loyal. His good will toward the English is spontaneous and disinterested. But when he returns to the East circumstances are bound to disillusionize him, and then, he being what he is, the developments which Mr. Mason describes are equally bound to occur. It it not surprising that the heroine of the tale ultimately becomes a rather inconsequential figure. She is brought upon the scene simply to illustrate the effect of the West upon the East, and, having served the purpose, she leaves Shere Ali and Linforth to hold the centre of the stage. The novel begins with the road, and it ends with the road, the whole matter being symbolical. We can imagine this book being of grave interest to a student of racial antagonisms and of modern political affairs. But, what is more to the point, we can also commend "The Broken Road" to the reader who cares for a good story well told.

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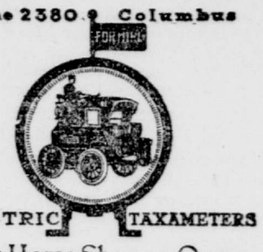

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JUVENILIA.

Books for Young Girls—Illustrated Fiction.

Many are the books that are good for girls to read—earnest, honest books, full of excellent teaching, suggestive moralizing; but few are the books that, with those pleasant qualities, have also literary distinction and clever character drawing. One of the few comes this season from the pen of the author of that not yet forgotten volume, "The Story Book Girls." In "Nina's Career" (the Macmillan Company) Miss Christina Gowans Whyte tells the story of a gentle, lovable, true hearted girl whose streak of genius inevitably provides her with a "career" as an artist. As interesting a character is Nina's chosen friend, Gertrude, a half spoiled child, naughtily wilful and winsome, with genuine womanliness beneath her wayward impetuosity. The story moves easily around a circle of well-to-do English people, whose lives are without any specially dramatic episodes; but in truth such episodes are not needed to emphasize its lessons of refinement, right living and unselfishness. The "career" is not a matter that is oppressively obtruded as the end and aim of the modern girl's existence—in this the story rises superior to a swarm of its contemporaries. An American story which has much of the wholesome atmosphere that permeates the history of Nina Wentworth is Marion Ames Taggart's "Daughters of the Little Grey House" (the McClure Company). This is the sequel to an earlier book, in which was painted an admirable picture of family affection and youthful courage and helpfulness. Roberta Grey, whose heart is as warm as her brains are sound, is a fine young heroine of the best type of girlhood. Her sympathies do not melt into sentimentality nor does her brave outlook on life include blatant aggression. The readers of "The Little Grey House" have no doubt longed to know what became of Roberta and her sisters. They will find no disappointment and much entertainment in this new volume.

A story whose heroine was also introduced in one of the books of a previous season bears the title of "Betty Baird's Ventures" (Little, Brown & Co.). Herein Mrs. Anna H. Weikel describes the efforts of a delightful young Betty to brighten the family fortunes and bring a little ease to the tired, uncomplaining father for whom life has been hard. One after another Betty's ventures fail, but this would not be a Christmas book worthy of the name if the final attempt did not succeed. It may be that in real life so comfortable a chance would not so early fall to a determined heroine, but it is not impossible, and good and sweet and humorous Betty Baird certainly deserves all she gets. Another book of the series in which Miss Anna Chapin Ray has discoursed concerning the lives and characters of a certain Sidney Stayre and her friends is entitled "Day: Her Year in New York" (Little, Brown & Co.). The story drags and suffers grievously from a lack of humor and of incident. We take leave to doubt the truth of the portrait of Sidney's sister Phyllis. She is called a "sensitive" girl, but no creature represented as having a mind could be so intolerably insolent and vulgar. Perhaps as the awful example she is meant to be she will be endured by young readers, but she does not improve the story—which is indeed a dull one. Worse than dull is "A Girl from America" (E. P. Dutton & Co.), by the English writer, Mrs. L. T. Meade. It is trash as false as it is silly. The Americans are the impossible persons of the oldtime English novel and play, beings whose breeding is of phenomenal badness and whose speech is a strange patois known only to the sixth rate British novelist of Victorian days. The heroine, who is continually described as "the richest heiress in New York City," is an extraordinary little vulgarian; her mother is a person whose grammar is a suitable accompaniment to her favorite expletive, "Good land!" Mrs. Meade also offers to the world a story about a little boy under the title of "The Colonel's Conquest" (G. W. Jacobs & Co.). It is wretched stuff which no youngster should be allowed to read.

An English story of a much better kind is "Feadora's Failure" (David McKay) by Lucie E. Jackson. It is marred by a piece of unnecessary melodrama, but apart from that it is a sane and healthy book. Feadora is the eldest daughter of a widower, and in the bumptious conceit of her teens undertakes to rule the house and manage her younger brothers and sisters. As she goes about it in the wrong way and in the wrong spirit she makes a particularly disagreeable mess of things, and is humiliated after a fashion which should point a moral to other too self-satisfied youngsters. In "Joan of Juniper Inn" (George W. Jacobs & Co.) Miss Emilia Elliot causes her young American heroine to bend all her energies to the comfort of her poverty stricken family. It is not probable that a real Joan could successfully conduct a restaurant undiscovered by her invalid mother, but if her domestic experiences are less true to reality than are those of Feadora they are marked by nobler motives. One foolish phase of the story has to do with a man who has been unjustly imprisoned; and another is the pervading presence of a conventional character of latter-day juvenilia—the offensively "smart" little boy. "Betty the Scribe" (the Saalfield Publishing Company), by Lilian Turner, is the story of an Australian girl who is as much of a failure in household management as is Miss Jackson's heroine, but her troubles arise not from vanity but from her unconquerable turn for authorship. All sorts of catastrophes occur, upstairs and down, her father is miserably uncomfortable, her motherless baby sister almost starves, while Betty, in a frenzy of writing or reading, is lost to all going on about her. What can cure such a situation? Betty, at least, does not stop writing, as the feminine novelists of past generations would make her do.

An uncommonly effective little story is George Madden Martin's "Abbie Ann" (the Century Company). The little girl who gives her name to the book is natural, affectionate, engaging, sometimes very amusing, for there is humor in her story as well as now and then a hint of pathos. There is something of burlesque in the figure of the little girl's mild old Aunt Ann, but otherwise the characters are veracious enough. "Theodora" (Little, Brown & Co.), by Katharine Pyle, is a pretty story of early school life. To be kind and patient, to pity and to succor—these are the wisest of the lessons learned by the child Theodora. Much the same lessons are taught in "Judy" (Little, Brown & Co.), a book by Temple Bailey. Judy is imperious and recalcitrant; she "hates" almost everything she is asked to see or do; but to young people of that temperament needful instruction is given by unpleasant happenings and Judy is no exception to that rule. Emily Westwood Lewis tells in "The Next Door Morelands" (Little, Brown & Co.) the story of a lonely little orphan who coming from her home in France to live with an absent minded old American uncle has many heartaches before she wins his affection. In her sadness she is comforted by a jolly family of children next door—children whose pranks and plays furnish forth many interesting pages. "The Queens' Company" (J. B. Lippincott Company) is a school story by Sara Hawks Sterling, a story of adored teachers and merry pupils, of school athletics and school theatricals, a story which probably appeals to children like those described. A book of a more ambitious sort is "Polly Pat's Parish" (Fleming H. Revell Company), by Winifred Kirkland. Red headed, impetuous Polly Pat is the motherless daughter of a clergyman—a clergyman who believes emphatically in practical Christianity, muscular if need be. The pair more or less transform a warring community in a way which in these days belongs strictly to imaginative literature.

CAPTAIN KIDD.

Some New Historical Papers on His Case.

There is some interesting light thrown upon Captain Kidd, the pirate, in the just published eighth volume of the Report on the Manuscripts of the Duke of Portland, edited for the Historical Manuscripts Commission. These manuscripts include letters written by the Colonial Governor, Lord Bellomont, after Kidd's capture, as well as information of various kinds and Kidd's own narrative. Kidd, it is remembered, was at first supposed to be a reasonably honest as well as brave man, and was, for the purpose of pirate extermination, furnished with the Adventure galley by Lord Bellomont, Mr. Livingston, Lord Chancellor Somers, Orford, the first Lord of the Admiralty, the Duke of Shrewsbury and Lord Romney, a Secretary of State. Kidd left London with a commission under the Great Seal, and another from the Admiralty to capture the famous pirate Tew and any others of the stripe he might come upon; and he received, moreover, the usual powers of a privateer against French merchantmen. "It has been supposed," says "The Scotsman," in commenting upon these MSS., "that Kidd set out with the intention of performing the work that he was sent to do, and only determined to turn pirate when he reached Madagascar. Some, looking to the unfairness of his trial, have seemed to hint a graver doubt. There may be nothing in these papers to prove conclusively that he was guilty of those crimes for which he was hanged, or to determine how long he remained honest; but one gets the impression that from the first Kidd's virtue was like John Silver's, and his own protest practically gives his case away."

According to one of the papers just printed by the Historical Manuscripts Commission and quoted by our contemporary, the beginning of the voyage was quite in keeping with the traditional atmosphere of piratical romance:—

> "When Kidd set forth on his intended voyage to Madagascar, his protences, owners and Admiralty power were as public as his rhodomontades thereof were vain; his authority was as ample as any King's commander," and therefore he "should pay no respect to the King's colours where'er he met them." His men, exulting in their security, were in high spirits. When a yacht fired upon the Adventure at Greenwich, for failing to strike as she passed, the pirate crew, believing themselves out of range, showed their derision with such effective and grotesque exuberance of pantomime that one almost regrets the change of manners that forbids unseemly quotation. For this, and a like incident at the Nore, Kidd was sent to Sheerness, and the matter laid before the Admiralty. But, "without any further notice or inquiry or judgment given upon the conduct and arrogance of this fellow, he was let loose from Sheerness, and from under the guard at the Nore, by a mysterious passiveness from all sides, and we hear no more of this person till he showed the King's authority for robbing, which, I take it, was to Captain Warren, near the Cape of Good Hope, saying he had as good a commission for his proceeding as the said Warren had for his conduct." We do hear more, however, from other sources. At the Nore Captain Sewart, of the Duchess, impressed all or most of Kidd's men. This was a danger to which all vessels were exposed. With the First Lord behind him, Kidd easily got back his men. Captain Stewart, however, "did not mind to restore the same men to Kidd, but the same number." Consequently, Kidd had aboard one unwilling sailor, Joseph Palmer, "an honest young man in his own nature," who afterward gave evidence against him. Before meeting Captain Warren the Adventure had visited New York, refitted with the proceeds of a French prize, and made great additions to her crew from the piratical population. Then followed the voyage to Madagascar and the Red Sea, the great haunts of pirates. Whether Kidd's great prize, the Quedah, merchant, was his lawful prey or not is not made quite clear. He might, however, "have taken the Mocha frigate, with a vast deal of wealth, had he been honest, but Joseph Palmer's deposition . . . will convince you he never attempted taking her, but just the contrary." It is said that he hobnobbed with the captain instead. Kidd's tale, of course, is different. He sent in a list of ninety-four men who deserted him and joined this pirate, adding that there was one other whose name he had forgotten.

Kidd's own story was to the effect that Bello-

Continued on eighth page.

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