

Certainly, the bookman, *quâ* bookman, will not be ungrateful for "The Silent Isle." He will treasure it, with its fellows, as sincerely conceived and as sincerely written; as an intimate confession of the author's mind at the moment in which it was written—if not after, for Mr. Benson emphasises the inevitable changing of the point of view, within even such narrow limits as those that bound the period of writing and that of publication. But the book has a greater claim than this. It is concerned, more or less directly, with the art of authorship as well as with that of right living. It takes cognisance of the friendship that is made by books; of the sacrifices that must be made, and made willingly, by those who make writing the business of their lives. Peculiarly stimulating is the vision of the future of prose, suggested by the example, premature and self-mutilated, of Walt Whitman. "What I am daily hoping to see," writes our essayist, "is the rise of a man of genius, with a rich poetical vocabulary, and a deep instinct for poetical material, who will throw aside resolutely all the canons of verse, and construct prose lyrics with a perfect mastery of cadence and melody." The references to Shelley, Byron, Keats, Leigh Hunt, and J. H. Shorthouse; the homage paid to the spirit of place in the chapters on Wells and Peterborough; and the note of self-defence apropos to "The Upton Letters," must also be mentioned. Whilst "The Silent Isle" will be, probably, the most widely read of all Mr. Benson's books, it is one that, probably, will arouse the keenest criticism. Some will never understand it. It is just a matter of temperament.

W. F. A.

A QUAKER POST-BAG.*

A post-bag which contains several letters from the noted Quaker, William Penn, would attract lovers of literary history in any case. But—and it is, perhaps, this volume's greatest triumph to declare the fact—the letters in it which bear Penn's signature are among the least interesting of the collection.

We do not know too much about Quakers. Indeed there are scores of men and women at this present day who think of Quakerism as a past creed, picturesque but dead; and of a Quaker as a dainty lady clad in dove-coloured silk; or a sturdy gentleman in brown cloth, with a broad-brimmed hat which he never takes off. To those men and women, as, also, to the present-day Quakers themselves, the "post-bag" which Mrs. Locker Lampson reveals in these pages will prove an instruction and an amusement.

Most of the letters in the bag are addressed to Sir John Rodes, of Barlbrough Hall, Derbyshire; some few others are from Quakers to Quakers of the period, and fit well into the collection. Sir John himself was a Quaker. He was, as Mr. Birrell quotes in his Preface, "convinced when young and held his integrity through many temptations." In the letters which follow we gain an attractive but faint picture of this refined, retiring, fastidious, courteous and high-minded baronet. He was the friend of Penn, who wrote to him lovingly, and gave him advice on matters concerning his faith, the employment of his time, and his general reserve. We like to see, incidentally, that the founder of Pennsylvania, and author of "The Fruits of Solitude," was not above mentioning his toothache, in a postscript; or of giving practical instruction to another preacher on the best treatment for jaundice. "If thou canst drink Garlick boyled in milk, or an handfull of Ivory shaveings—boyled in clear whit wine posset, drink it, and, then drink the posset drink (a pint)." Penn was at times concerned about the inactivity of Sir John, his

friend. "The Lord that found thee out and called thee, intended thee other work than to spend thy Youth, the cream of thy time, in a retired unconcerned silence." But other of his Quaker friends seemed to be more concerned about Sir John's state of bachelorhood. "A frd or two of thine have thought of a person to be thy wife," writes John Tomkins, "if thou shall think so. She is young, and hath a great deal of mony, and it's beleevd her Parents would be easy to consent. . . . I mention it because am desierous to see thee well maryed, that thou might enjoy the comforts of that relation wch by the blessing of God, is certainly the happiest on Earth." And again, "A ffriend lately recommended to me a daughter of Isaac Heming as a person suitable for thee if thou shall think so also." John Tomkins really worried himself over the matter; and returned to it again and again in his letters. We ourselves like Henry Gouldney as well as any of Sir John's correspondents. He seems to us to be one of those persons of whom, perhaps, Lamb's friend, George Dyer, is among the chief, men who without being greatly famous are the most lovable as they are the most engaging of friends; lending colour and life to volumes which are nominally concerned with persons more celebrated than themselves. We want to know more about Henry Gouldney, although his letters tell us much. "Excuse my immethodical scribe," says one of his postscripts, "'twas ruff as it ran"—and we thank Mrs. Locker Lampson for introducing us to a man who could write two hundred years ago, not only of his faith, and the vicissitudes of life, but of his friend's "wigg"—"Coulers in the fancy are variable"—and of his own figure and need of a horse—"I grow to fatt; and stirring being good to preserve my health, the worthey, honest Doctor was always pressing me to rideing. . . . Trot and Walke is all I want of a horse; the trot *easy*, As to price, I leave it from six to twelve pounds"—who wrote a bad hand; sent barrels of oysters, carriage paid; and could chuckle quite humanly over John Tomkins himself and his conjugal felicity, "Our frd. J. Tompkins is so ingaged wth. his spouse that his evenings are spent in amours, modestly but fondly psueing it."

Whether we turn to Penn's advice on the choice of books, or Gouldney's stream of kindly gossip, or Tomkins's domestic sorrows, or Martha Rodes' instructions for the buying of a grave-coloured silk coat, because Camlit was too thick for the hot weather—the volume is a kindly, homely picture of Quaker life two hundred years ago and a reminder of that simple creed. From Sir John himself we get no word, but we close the book with a full appreciation of the friends who loved him and cared for him, body and soul.

L. QUILLER COUCH.

E. V. LUCAS AS A LITERARY CRICKETER.*

There was something so irresistibly droll in the comical side-cock of a puppy's head, as I saw him sitting up—solemn as a judge, or as a drunkard who hopes to convey the impression that he is sober—in a doorway, this morning, that I was minded to laugh softly to myself, and to be glad that I was alive.

Too foolish for recountal as the incident may be, some at least of my readers will not misunderstand me when I say that the reading of Mr. Lucas's new novel continued in me the same happy and contented frame of mind. Briefly, his book made me glad to be alive, and more genuinely grateful to him than I have been to a novelist for a very long time.

That same morning I had seen, in my newspaper, a weighty and learned criticism, in which the writer wrung metaphorical hands over the fact that "Mr. Ingleside"

* "Mr. Ingleside." By E. V. Lucas. 6s. (Methuen.)

* "A Quaker Post-Bag." Edited by Mrs. G. Locker Lampson. With Preface by Augustine Birrell. 8s. 6d. net. (Longmans.)

is not a work of "fictive art." So far from agreeing, I am of opinion that infinitely more art went to the making of "Mr. Ingleside" than goes to the construction of a score of novels of the day.

That which is seemingly artless is often better art than that which is merely artificial. Your machine-made novels, with their "faked," forced, and artificial openings, crises, and climaxes, are, nine-tenths of them, infinitely inferior, either as art or as life, to such a work as "Mr. Ingleside." The characters of your conventional novelist often remind one of the mechanical toy figures we buy from the street hawker. The novelist takes his mechanical figure from the box where it is lying inert, winds it up and sets it going to walk, to caper, or to waltz, until such time as the machinery has run down, and it can be placed back in the box. Then he makes a bow of the kind which invites applause, and says: "Ladies and Gentlemen, this is Art. Here you have the life-story of a human being, rounded and complete." Mr. Lucas makes no such pretence. He says in effect: "I am not an angel of Life and Death who proposes, while you wait, and in the time which it takes to re-sole a pair of boots, to show you the whole cycle of human existence, as astronomers show stars through a telescope. But if you are really interested in life as seen, not from a star, and in the company of an angel, but from its human and its humorous side, I will do my best to entertain you, and to introduce you to company which I hold to be pleasant."

If you take Mr. Lucas at his word, you will find that there is no better judge of good company than he, and when at last you reluctantly bid him good-bye, you will have seen more of life, seen it in truer perspective, and have made the acquaintance of more real women and men, than if you had read a score of novels patterned on the familiar lines. If, as Emerson says, a foolish consistency is the bugbear of little minds, an equally foolish conventionality appears to be the bugbear of little novelists. Why certain critics demand that the novels of any particular period should be constructed, like rifles, on one plan, I fail to see. On the contrary, the novelist who, like Mr. Lucas, has the courage and the originality to improve upon the old pattern, and to strike out a line of his own, is a benefactor to the reading public and to his art. All that we ask is that he have a story to tell, and that it be interesting. Mr. Lucas has a good story to tell, and a story which is not only interesting but fascinating. Were I writing as a cricketer, instead of as a critic, I should say that he has sent down a "maiden over," by which I mean that his book is as innocent of villainy, incident, murder, and intrigue as a "maiden" is innocent of runs. Yet just as by the excellence of his cricket, a bowler can send down an over which, if only for the reason that every ball is "dead on," is infinitely better worth watching than some fluke, flashy performance that may get an occasional wicket, but is more likely to prove a high factor in the piling up of runs, so Mr. Lucas by the sheer excellence of his cricket keeps every watchful sportsman tense and eager, and every skilled eye fixed upon the ball.

Deliberately to discard all adventitious aid in the shape of incident, sensation, and sentimentality; deliberately to elect to write of the everyday life of everyday people, depending for success entirely upon oneself, requires courage on the part of a craftsman. Yet that is what Mr. Lucas has attempted, and in his courageous and sportsmanlike attempt he has entirely succeeded.

To return to our cricket metaphor. "Every run is scored off Mr. Lucas's own bat." With the material at his disposal, not one novelist in fifty would have made anything but a dull tale. That there is not one dull page, not one dull line, in the whole of "Mr. Ingleside," is sufficient witness to the author's wit, humour, humanity, observation, and art.

I have compared Mr. Lucas to a bowler sending down a "maiden over." As a batsman he is hitting, and hitting

brilliantly all the time. It was my intention when I began this review to keep, for the purpose of quotation, a "score-sheet" in which to set down a record of these "hits," but, before I was half through, I was well on the way to compile another "Wisdom While you Wait" and so gave up the task in despair. It is a wonderful innings, this of Mr. Lucas. He has carried out his bat for another century, and never given so much as one chance to the men in the field—his critics—all the time.

COULSON KERNAHAN.

CAGLIOSTRO.*

The charlatan, though his fashion may vary from age to age, will reappear until the extinction of human credulity. Cagliostro did not greatly differ from other adventurers who have claimed the power of healing the sick or of transmuting lead into gold or of making diamonds. But he had the ill-luck to be involved in the portentous scandal of the "Queen's necklace"—the necklace the Queen never had and which she refused to have. This brought to Cagliostro an attention which would not otherwise have been bestowed upon him and made him the hero of Goethe's drama and Dumas's romance. For whilst he was basking in the patronage of the Cardinal de Rohan that marvellous prelate was being fooled to the top of his bent by pretended messages, letters, and even a pretended interview with the Queen of France, all manufactured by Madame Lamotte. That de Rohan, a member of the proudest family of France and a Prince of the Church—though an unworthy one—should have been deceived by such clumsy forgeries and devices is wonderful, and when the sordid swindle came to light the scandal was so exploited by the enemies of the monarchy that the trial of the Cardinal, of the Comtesse de Lamotte, and of Cagliostro became, as has been said, the Prologue of the Revolution.

Mr. Trowbridge claims, but surely without any just reason, to be the first who has treated the subject "honestly." Yet few who have waded through the welter of books and pamphlets about Cagliostro in English, French, German, Italian, Dutch, and Latin will think Carlyle's estimate dishonest or differ greatly from the judgment there

recorded. The new contention which Mr. Trowbridge brings into the discussion is a strong doubt as to the identity of Giuseppe Balsamo and Alexandre, Comte de Cagliostro. Although he does not absolutely assert their separate identities, the idea that they were not one and the same person runs through and colours the whole work. He has



Count Cagliostro.

From "Cagliostro," by W. R. H. Trowbridge.
(Chapman & Hall.)

* "Cagliostro: The Splendour and Misery of a Master of Magic." By W. R. H. Trowbridge. With numerous illustrations. 16s. net. (Chapman & Hall.)