

"Michael Field"

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF
MICHAEL FIELD. Boston: Houghton Mifflin
Co. 1925. \$1.75.

Reviewed by EDWARD DAVISON

KATHERINE BRADLEY and Edith Cooper, her niece, under their pseudonym "Michael Field," wrote poetry in quality and kind sufficiently unfamiliar to create a brief furore in England during the rather stagnant 'eighties. More than one famous name scaled the temporary popularity of their work. But the echoes of applause died away with suspicious suddenness when Michael Field's identity was discovered. To others besides Browning it must have been something of a shock to discover not only two authors instead of one, but also the sex of those authors. The contemporary timidity is easier to understand than the neglect of Michael Field during the subsequent thirty years. Now Miss Mary Sturgeon and Mr. T. Sturge Moore (himself a poet who has yet to come into his own) have collaborated to turn the scales of popular appreciation back again in the poets' favor. In many ways this is a kinder decade. Women poets are not, *ipso facto*, objects of suspicion to us as they were, generally, to the Victorians. It is a pity, however, that Mr. Sturge Moore in his rather garrulous preface did not hold his enthusiasm on a tighter rein. Literary comparisons are as odious as any others. Michael Field, at the best, did not surpass Landor as Mr. Sturge Moore would have it: nor would anybody, even though taken unawares, be likely to mistake a Michael Field poem for an Elizabethan poem, unless, of course, they lacked an eye and ear for Elizabethan verse.

Ah, Eros does not always smite
With cruel shining dart
Whose bitter point with sudden might
Rends the unhappy heart—
O'er it sometimes the boy will deign
Sweep the shaft's feathered end
And friendship rises without pain
Where the white plumes descend.

The spirit and the idiom of this are vitally different from those of Landor. In comparison with Landor's best it is "conscious", uneasy, awkward. Set it against "Dirce"—

Stand close around, ye Stygian set,
With Dirce in one boat conveyed,
Lest Charon seeing should forget
That he is old and she a shade.

These four lines are effortless: they read themselves: their subtlety is immeasurably superior to the dotted I's and crossed T's of the first poem: they are a masterpiece of literary economy. And the foregoing quotation from Michael Field illustrates the prevailing weakness of most of the poems in the book. The idea of the poem has not been adequately translated. It is not inevitably rememberable as such brief epigrammatic lyrics need to be to compete with the kind of poems which have made A. E. Housman and Landor famous. But it is Mr. Sturge Moore and not the present reviewer who disparages Michael Field, for by making such unfortunate and unnecessary comparisons in his introduction Mr. Sturge Moore begs the question and tends to distract attention from his real purpose.

That purpose deserves our closest sympathy and support. We recommend our readers to buy the book as an act of grace and justice to two women who lived well, died nobly, and wrote beautifully. They have fared well at the hands of the little band of enthusiasts, headed by Mr. Sturge Moore and Mr. Harold Monro, which has put the name of Michael Field and the best of his poems into such handsome print. The poems furnished one of the most peculiar instances in literary history of astonishing collaboration, especially because the best of Michael Field's work takes the essentially personal lyric form. The fact that two people, however intimate, could produce impassioned and beautiful lyrics, challenges many generally accepted ideas as to the nature of a poet's emotional integrity. Can two minds feel as one? Or having felt so can they express themselves as one? The answer would involve a whole volume of criticism in the course of which it might be necessary to narrow down the definition of a lyric poem to such dimensions as would exclude everything in the book under review. But, lyric or not, two women became one poet in Michael Field.

The BOWLING GREEN

Memoranda

WHEN a ship comes in from sea, and lies in a foreign harbor with a tender or pilot-boat under her side, the passenger leans over the rail listening with keen attention to those anonymous voices. It is as near as he ever comes to the comprehending detachment of a ghost or a god that walks secretly among men. The strange stillness of the vessel, after days of tremble and swing, is uncanny; and also it is dark, so all you know of this outland port is the eloquent sparkle of lighthouses and the distant brightness of a town. Even there, though it is "abroad," supper is on the table, children are going to bed, and the universal human law is in operation, viz. that people prefer to be amused. When the *Caronia* was at Plymouth one September evening I harkened sharply for the first English voice from the tender *Sir Richard Grenville*. The travelling ear, exempt for a few weeks from all familiar hubbubs, takes with thrilling significance these altruist fragments of sound. Overhearing is so much more enigmatic than hearing. Conrad described at the end of the "Personal Record" the first English words he ever heard in their native use, when he was a boy in a French pilot-boat alongside a British tramp. They were "Look out, there," growled by some seaman in the dark. The first words I heard at Plymouth were of the same gruff practical sort. "Make that line fast forrard."

I have not forgotten the first French I ever heard on French soil. It was in 1912 when another youngster and I were debarking from a small cargo-steamer at Boulogne: I heard a stevedore cry out "Ce n'est pas la même chose!" There was a queer sing-song cadence in his way of saying it. I can still recognize in my memory his bearded and rather messianic face; he uttered the words, evidently, as a witty retort to something one of his mates had said. To me they were the best of wit, unforgettable, for they brought home to me how many "foreigners" there are in the world.

A short story in two chapters, translated from two items found in the back pages of Paris newspapers, illustrating the vogue in France of M. Paul Morand, the entertaining author of "Tendres Stocks," "Ouvert La Nuit," "L'Europe Galante," etc.

I

These latter days M. Jean Frégy, manufacturer of 6 rue de Bourgogne, was called on by a gentleman with decorations who announced himself as M. Bachmann, a lawyer, and asked to buy an automobile which he had seen advertised in a newspaper. The bargain having been discussed, seller and purchaser took a long drive together to try out the car. In the evening they were returning from Versailles when at the Black Bridge, near Saint-Cloud, the lawyer stopped the car to pick up his cap, which, he said, had blown off. While both men were looking for it, the pseudo-lawyer leapt suddenly into the car and decamped at full speed. The police are looking for the swindler.

II

They have just arrested at Fécamp the audacious malefactor who, on Tuesday evening, near the bridge at Saint-Cloud, under circumstances that we have related, made off with the automobile of M. Jean Frégy, business man in Paris, 6 rue de Bourgogne.

He had put up at a hotel under the name of Paul Morand, author, and had already succeeded in borrowing 400 francs. In spite of his first denials he was shown to be lying, and finally admitted his identity as René Jules Eugène Brisard, born 16 July, 1896, at Puteaux. He added that before stealing M. Frégy's car he had tried to swindle M. Bachmann, a Paris lawyer, of 2000 francs. He was wanted by the courts of Dieppe, Havre, Coutances, Paris, and Versailles.

In a compartment on the P. L. M. railway, carried smoothly along through the grey and golden chequer of a day striped with showers and sunbursts. The snug little house on wheels, the napkins crocheted with PLM over the upholstered seats, blue curtains at the windows, the various enamel signs: *Il est dangereux de se pencher en dehors* (which always seems to me very unidiomatic French: I hanker for *C'est* rather than *il est*) and *Ne laissez pas les enfants jouer avec la serrure* (which always appeals to me as so excellent a

motto for The Church). The station of La Roche-Migennes (La Roche-McGinnis, the Caliph calls it) where you flit out for sandwiches and a bottle of Chablis labelled *2fr. 50 à consommer sur place*, 3 fr. 50 *pour emporter*, and admire the great poplars and the canal behind the *gare*. That afternoon, after we passed those marvellous masses of thick plushy trees all velveteed together along the skirts of Fontainebleau forest, I observed, at Brunoy, an inn called *Au Berceau d'Anacreon*. This pleased me, and set me thinking of my friend Archie MacLeish, the poet, whom I had known in Normandy. I had no notion whether he was still in France, or where. Anacreon's Cradle, I said to myself, would be a grand place for us two to foregather and orchestrate a few beakers. I am telling you only the truth when I say that a few days later, in Paris, I met a mutual friend of whom I asked "Monsieur MacLeish, ou demeure-t-il maintenant?" The answer was, He is living at Brunoy.

List of Prohibitions in the bedroom of a small hotel on the Place de la Sorbonne:—

All degradations in the rooms are at the charge of the guest. It is forbidden: to do cooking in the rooms, to wash linen, to branch any apparatus on the electric canalization and to modify in whatever it may be the existing installations, to introduce any animal or to make cooking come in from outside.

Some time ago I raised the question whether the translator of Maurois's delightful "Ariel" had merely retranslated M. Maurois's French version of Shelley's letters and sayings, or had taken the conscientious course of verifying the original English. This point, which is of prime importance to any intelligent reader, apparently had not been discussed. M. Maurois writes very charmingly to say that "The translator took great pains to hunt in the letters and works of Shelley what he had actually written. I helped her as well as I could, and I don't think there are many mistakes."

Certainly the most thrilling single event in our visit in London was Barry Jackson's production of Hamlet in modern dress; and if the New York presentation is as cunningly directed you may look forward to huge enjoyment. The effect is not, as some have anticipated, farcical; on the contrary well-fed Londoners in the stalls forgot to smoke in their absorption. Undistracted by irrelevant trappings the mind discerns endless unsuspected suggestions in the piece. It was no longer a dear old charade punctuated with incredible splendors of ranted verse; as directed by Sir Barry Jackson, in the quietest of conversational tones, it became not a spectacle but an intuition. It was interesting to note that while Hamlet was perfectly contemporary, Ophelia seemed unreal: women have moved much faster than men lately, and one could not quite digest this young person's obedience to the snipe-minded Polonius. The real excitement, though, was the new feeling that the play is not, as so many professors have tried to persuade us, a solitary monument of prodigy that can never happen again; so performed it enters into the great flow of contemporary drama and you can quite well see that as great a piece may be written tomorrow, if you can find a dramatist naïf enough. My own first thought was that I can never again see it done any other way. Jackson's production made it not a curiosity but what Shakespeare intended it to be, a parable of the life every man knows but will not admit.

A friend suggests that the proper caper for the New York opening would be a box-party whose members would appear in Elizabethan garb.

Next memorable after Shakespeare and Jackson's "Hamlet," and perhaps not altogether different in its intimations, was seeing a distinguished-looking elderly man, in a cutaway coat and holding himself very erect and proud, playing a street-organ in the Strand. On his instrument was a sign saying that he is a former guardsman, willing to accept any honorable employment that may be offered.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

Books for Children

Folk-Tale Collections

- WONDER TALES OF OLD JAPAN. By B. L. K. HENDERSON and C. CALVERT. New York: Frederick A. Stokes. 1925. \$2.50.
- SHEN OF THE SEA. By ARTHUR BOWIE CHRISMAN. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1925. \$2.50.
- THE GOLDEN PORCH. By W. M. L. HUTCHINSON. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1925.
- OLD SWEDISH FAIRY TALES. By ANNA WAHLBERG. Translated by Antoinette DeC. Patterson. Philadelphia: Penn Publishing Co. 1925. \$3.
- THE FLAME TREE. By ROSETTA BASKERVILLE. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1925.
- NAVAHO TALES. By WILLIAM WHITMAN, 3rd. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1925. \$1.75.
- WONDER TALES OF ANCIENT SPAIN. By B. L. K. HENDERSON and C. CALVERT. New York: Frederick A. Stokes. 1925. \$2.50.
- CROATIAN TALES OF LONG AGO. IV. By BERLIC-MAZURANIC. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co. 1925. \$3.
- ROUND THE WORLD IN FOLK TALES. By RACHEL M. FLEMING. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1925. \$1.50.

Reviewed by MARION C. DODD

CHILDREN are being much encouraged nowadays towards a vogue for folk-tales. If I were not already aware of this I should need only to look at the pile of books before me; at a random glance one would say that nearly every country in the world is represented,—and this in one autumn list. There is, however, a sound underlying idea. The life of the mysterious beings at the other end of that theoretical tunnel to China is one of the first things to pique the imagination of a small child. Are they like himself? Are they quite different? What do they do? What do they wear? And think!—and say? Here is information really wanted. Give it in story form,—that is, dramatically and concretely,—and education in the best sense of the word is begun. So let us have folk-tales by all means; let us tunnel in every direction. But interesting they must be if children are really to read them, and possessed of the authentic atmosphere of their sources if the reading is to be of value.

Having these two potential virtues in mind, then, out of this group of books I should commend four, the Japanese, Chinese, Greek, and Swedish, as being most successful in both respects. The others are good in one way or another, but these are head and shoulders above the rest in the roundness of their appeal.

The Japanese collection escapes the oversophistication which our children are apt to find in many stories of this race, and carries a good balance of true Japanese quality and genuine appeal, through stories that are well rounded as to plot, delightfully illustrated (by Constance Rowlands), and of just the size to achieve a sense of completeness and yet retain the attention of rather young readers. Quaintness, real interest, and charm may be claimed both for this and for the Chinese collection, "Shen of the Sea," which has also another quality not so often found in folk-tales—a humor that is very engaging. These Chinese stories are hung upon short, picturesque plots told in an odd blend of American nonsense and Chinese seriousness, which is whimsical and delightful. So also are the charming silhouettes which form Else Hasselriis's illustrations. These are wonderfully in tone with the book and a genuine contribution to its success.

Merely to pass from these Oriental pictures and situations to the dignified and simple clarity of the set of Greek fairy tales from Pindar, "The Golden Porch," might very well begin to form in a child's mind a conception of the meaning of that quite adult word "classic," and of many of the actual characteristics of Greek life and thought. These are largely a free translation, with suitable framework supplied and skilfully woven into an artistic and satisfying whole. Decorative and imaginative illustrations by Dugald Walker add to the real distinction of the book. Some of the stories are of course familiar, at least to a grown-up, although told here at greater length than usual. All are poetic and full of the marvels which the Greeks delighted to believe in. These may be "Greek myths" to us, but for a

child they will be pleasant fairy-tales with poetry and imagination in their very essence.

My fourth blue ribbon goes to a large and beautiful volume, "Old Swedish Fairy Tales." In atmosphere they are a wide leap from what we have been sketching, but the children will shut their eyes and plunge with satisfaction. A few titles will indicate the nature of the stories: "The Singing Bell," "The Forest's Foster Daughter," "The Sugar Temple," "The Young Count's Heart," and so on. Their plots, although brief, seem to me varied, distinctive, and interesting. Yet they retain all the needed simplicity since they are neither too fantastic nor too involved. The illustrations, by Jeannette Berkowitz, always quaint and often droll, are an additional entertainment.

Of the remainder of our nine books two, the Uganda and the Navaho tales, seem to me valuable chiefly as being out of the ordinary rather than wholly successful from a child's point of view. The short African stories are told with little imaginative style, largely about animals, with an almost La Fontaine-like quality (minus the moral deductions). They render an accounting for traditions rather than a picture of customs and life, which a child will perceive more in the illustrations than in the text. But the scene of the book is unusual and well worth developing. The Navaho stories also will bring few vivid pictures of native life to the reader, for they are devoted to Indian mythology. This in itself invites no objection, if it were not that long, rambling, inconsequential plots are involved in picturing the obscure beliefs in many mystic worlds one above another, inhabited by strange gods, giants, wizards and enchanted animals. The legends have been carefully preserved and translated, however, and even if an appeal to younger children is missing, there is an authentic value for the more thoughtful among the older ones. The illustrations, by John P. Heins, are striking and imaginative and will help to create a bizarre and fantastic atmosphere.

The Spanish and Croatian collections, particularly the former, are in plot less characteristic of any special country than one would expect. They are good adventure stories, packed with transformations, always with happy endings, and well and simply told. The Croatian ones, made into a beautiful book with both colored plates and line drawings by Vladimir Kirin, are too diffuse and wandering but have a more individual quality, in scene if not in plot, pursuing their woodsmen, fishermen, princesses, gnomes, and dragons through forest, mountain, and water life.

One other book, written on a different plan, must be included here,—a "round-the-world" collection; an unpretentious, and straightforward attempt to do a difficult thing—to construct a picture of a race or country from one story. The author would have helped herself materially by a much greater differentiation of style in writing the various tales and in several cases by a selection that would have been more essentially characteristic of the country. To cover this lack of emphasis her introductory notes should be used to point out distinctive features, in conjunction, also, with the illustrations. The span covered is large, including several unusual contributions such as the Australian and Egyptian, and the book was well worth doing.

Now that our tales are told, are there a few elements of thought or style that make for unity in all this highly itemized material? Four at least fall easily into place as parts of what must therefore be to some extent the universal thought of all races. First the constant use of the magic transformation to achieve the purpose of either hero or villain; does this not represent a cosmic Desire To Be Other Than What One Is? Secondly, the quite customary participation of animals in the speech and life of man (was there ever a fairy-tale animal who could not talk?)—which I should call the Great Recognition: are we after all so far removed from beasts? Thirdly, the desire of a couple for a child, to secure which they pledge anything or everything,—foundation of countless plots. For which no interpretation is needed. And finally the frequent tendency of thought to fall into instructive epigrams, whether simple or profound. Is this not a Storing Of Wisdom For The Race?—if not the inheri-

tance then at least the maintenance of acquired characteristics? These are fairly simple observations to make upon material so varied in content and in date, representing such cycles of human life both real and imagined. But if there is after all some sort of universal pulse, perhaps the folk-tale offers one way of putting a transient finger upon it.

For the Youngest

- CHARLIE AND HIS COAST GUARDS. By HELEN HILL and VIOLET MAXWELL. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1925. \$1.25.
- LITTLE DOG READY AT HOME. By MABEL F. STRYKER. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1925. \$1.75.
- THE LITTLE LOST PIGS. By HELEN FULLER ORTEN. New York: Frederick A. Stokes. 1925. \$1.25.
- TALES THAT NIMKO TOLD. By MARY BRECHT PULVER. Century. \$1.50.

Reviewed by EVA VON B. HANSL

AS "JUVENILES" are written for children to read, does it not seem only fair to the authors to have children pass judgment on them? For how else can we determine if the author has succeeded in accomplishing what he set out to do? Children have little or no critical judgment, to be sure; they have formed few, if any, literary criteria but they do know a good yarn from a poor one, they do recognize sincerity and sham and they know, too, what they want in the way of fun and nonsense and decent behavior in their heroes.

With this premise, I turned the four little books which the editors sent me over to my children and some of their friends for review. The reactions are theirs—the opinions mine!

Three of these four little books are "repeaters"—that is, they are written in the familiar vein by veteran authors about characters already known to their readers. There is, for instance, "Charlie and His Coast Guards," a sequel to "Charlie and His Kitten Topsy" and "Charlie and His Puppy Bingo" by Helen Hill and Violet Maxwell. As Charlie grows up, his readers are evidently expected to do likewise, for this book, I find, requires of its readers a more mature (if one may use so big a term for so slight an advance in pre-school years) intelligence and more socially advanced interests than its predecessors. It is a wise author who takes his growing audience with him! This is what my son calls "an important book" because it is full of facts about boats, buoys, sailors' knots and hitches; full of facts about coast-guard stations and the ways of the sea and the men who follow the sea. It is full of delicious nautical terms which are great fun to bandy about, more fun, even, than the naughty terms picked up on land!

The author of "Little Dog Ready at Home," Mabel F. Stryker, also takes her readers along with her. "It's so much better to have him at home," said my eight-year-old daughter, "because he isn't always getting lost and sick as he did in the other book. I do wish it wouldn't stop so soon. I'd like it to go on and on"—which is about as high a degree of praise as an eight-year-old can give. To which this carping old adult adds a horrid "BUT"—the author occasionally descends to a sort of satire on grown-up institutions and foibles, such as club-meetings and small-town weeklies. It is a jolly little book, however, about a very real little dog whom any child might covet.

If the plot's the thing, then we commend to you, without any "buts" or "ifs", the very simple and most exciting story of "The Little Lost Pigs," by Helen Fuller Orten, whose "Summer on Cloverfield Farm" we have read no less than five times. The book would be worth having in the juvenile library if for no other reason than to be able to look at the all-inclusive map of the little pigs' world, with its round-about horizon of puffy white clouds in a sky of bluest blue by Luxor Price.

We are not, as a family, so wholehearted in our commendation of "Tales that Nimko Told," by Mary Brecht Pulver, who made them up, first, for her own little boy, as many of them have no more distinction than the jingles any of us might invent for home consumption. Some of the tales are inspired by a delicious fancy, however, and the illustrations by Mary Sherwood Wright are almost irresistible.

A Shelf of Boys' Books

TWO standard writers for boys are *Ralph Henry Barbour* and *Samuel Scoville, Jr.* The former's latest production, "Barry Locke: Halfback" (Century. \$1.75) is entirely characteristic, dealing with natural likeable boys at prep school, and with athletics, in Mr. Barbour's characteristic, graphic style. Mr. Scoville's adventure tale, "The Red Diamond" (Century. \$1.75), recalls the success of his former venture in this vein, "The Inca Emerald." Here are the heroes of the preceding book off on a new and exciting quest. Both Mr. Barbour's and Mr. Scoville's yarns appeared serially in *St. Nicholas*, and a young gentleman of our acquaintance, aged eleven, was a strong rooter for both tales.

Violet Irwin again collaborates with the great explorer, *Vilhjalmur Stefansson*, in "The Shaman's Revenge" (Macmillan. \$2). Here is drama of the far North involving explorers, whalers, police officers, and Eskimos. Like the former "Kak, the Copper Eskimo" it is a story containing both humor and excitement. *Elmer Russell Gregor*, the author of a string of Indian stories, tells, in "The Medicine Buffalo" (Appleton. \$1.75) of the young chief, White Otter, and pictures vividly an Indian warrior's life in the wilderness. "Pirates of the Delaware" (Lippincott. \$2), by *Rupert Sargent Holland*, another writer whose name is familiar to boys, opens in Philadelphia of a century ago. There is plenty of action, and fighting aboard a rakish schooner. And *A. May Holaday*, in "On the Sidelines" (Century. \$1.75) tells a breezy story of college life on the Pacific Coast.

Joseph Gollomb has gained commendation with his "Lincoln High" series, and "Tuning in at Lincoln High" (Macmillan. \$1.75), the latest of these, is a tale of school life in New York City, and of the development of a boy's character in a big high school. "Clearport Boy," by *Joseph B. Ames* (Century. \$1.75), is officially approved by the Boy Scouts of America and much of the action takes place in a Scout Camp. In "Midshipman All" (Appleton. \$1.75), *Fitzhugh Green*, a Lieutenant Commander in the Navy, gives us the second of a series of stories of Annapolis life. His book bears a foreword by *Rear Admiral Sims*. And, faring further afield, "Grip and I," by *Count Nils Cornstedt* (Doubleday, Page. \$1.75), tells of the adventures in Nigeria of "Grip," a thoroughbred bull-terrier.

Kenneth Payson Kempton wrote "Phantom Gold" and has a predilection for sea-stories. In "Red Eagle Island" (Century. \$1.75) he brings in the sea off the coast of Maine. His characters are "Down-easters", and just can't stay ashore. This is a thoroughly interesting and wholesome yarn. "The Measure of a Boy," by *Walter H. Nichols* (Macmillan. \$2) is a sequel to "Trust a Boy!", in which the same boys have another adventure,—this time on the Great Salt Lake. And, to conclude, "Sid Turner, Fire Guard" (Doubleday, Page. \$1.75), by *James Howard Hull*, is a story very informative concerning the forestry service and the life of a forest ranger by one who was one himself. In this workmanlike yarn one learns a deal about fighting fires, breaking trails, timber cruising, and surveying.

Boy Scouts and others of their age who are not members of their organization will find much to entertain them in the eleventh volume of the "Boy Scouts Year Book," edited by Franklin K. Mathews (Appleton. \$2.50). A compilation of stories, poems, informative articles, and illustrations taken largely from *Boys' Life*, it contains among other interesting features tales by Albert Payson Terhune, Rafael Sabatini, Ralph Henry Barbour, and S. S. Dunne, to name but a few of its fiction writers, and brief expositions by such experts in their fields as Anthony Fiala, Douglas Fairbanks, Archibald Rutledge, and Horace Kephart.

In "Songs for Youth" (Doubleday, Page. \$2.50) Kipling has selected from his "Collected Verse" those poems he believes to have an especial appeal to the young. The book is illustrated in color by Leo Bates. The old songs and ballads have not lost their tang. The selection is good, well-chosen and well-arranged. Such great staves as "The Ballad of East and West", "The Last Chanty", and "The Last Rhyme of True Thomas" should be in every child's rightful heritage of true poetry. And a score of others.