

**CHAPTERS FROM
CHILDHOOD;
REMINISCENCES OF AN
ARTIST'S GRANDDAUGHTER**

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Chapters from childhood; reminiscences of an artist's granddaughter by Juliet M. Soskice

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JULIET M. SOSKICE

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ARTIST'S GRANDDAUGHTER**



JULIET Hueffer (aged 4)
(Mrs. Soskice)

After a drawing by Ford Madox-Brown

CHAPTERS FROM CHILDHOOD

Reminiscences of an Artist's Granddaughter

By

JULIET M. SOSKICE

With a Foreword by
A. G. GARDINER

Illustrated with Portraits

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FOREWORD

THE literature of childhood is not voluminous. There is abundant literature and often admirable literature for the child, fairy tales and tales of adventure, and animal stories of the "Black Beauty" *genre*. Swift even turned his terrific wrath with mankind to the uses of the nursery, and Bunyan made the agonies of the spiritual pilgrim as thrilling and vivid an experience to the child as the tap of Pew's stick on the frosty ground in "Treasure Island." But the literature of childhood, the literature which re-creates the thought and feelings of the child mind when the experiences of life are new and strange, and before the glamour of the revelation has faded into the light of common day, are rare. It demands many unusual qualities: an intense visual memory, an imaginative sympathy, and that power of recalling emotion long after the emotion has passed which has been described as the essential quality of poetry. It was in this evocation of the child that the genius of Dickens touched its highest expression, and there is no better title to immortality

than the first part of "David Copperfield." The slighter sketches of Kenneth Graham in "The Golden Age" and "Dream Days" have the same revealing beauty; but it is the beauty of childhood seen through the medium of disillusioning years. The humour and the joy are the character of the child, but the pathos is the pathos of memory. In these "Chapters from Childhood" we have, I think, an indisputable addition to the authentic literature of childhood. The writer had the advantage of an unusual setting for her experiences. To have had Ford Madox-Brown for grandfather and playmate, to have lived in the Rossetti circle was to have had an introduction to life of a quality that falls to few, and though it is not the circumstances of childhood, but the emotional reaction to circumstances, which is the soul of its literature, this record gains from the setting. The picture of F. M. B. in his old age, as seen through the eyes of his "little pigeon," has the untroubled beauty of the child vision, but no less remarkable are the thumbnail sketches, at once artless and penetrating, of the nameless and ordinary people who flit across the field of view, the amiable policeman, the lovesick cabman, the Reverend Mother, the nuns, the domestic servants. They are called from the past with a sudden freshness and a certainty of touch that convey the sense of personal contact.

They appear only to disappear, but they dwell in the memory with the significance of permanent types of the human drama. But the chief person on the little stage is the child herself, and it is as a record of the first impressions of things and the first intellectual and emotional reaction to ideas, that these chapters are chiefly valuable. The name of Mrs. Soskice is familiar to the reading world, through her remarkable rendering of the great poem of Nekrassov, "The Poet of the People's Sorrow," the Piers Plowman of Russian literature. In this book she reveals an original gift of a high order from which the public will expect much.

A. G. GARDINER.

