

**THE INVISIBLE PLAYMATE:
W.V. HER BOOK & IN
MEMORY OF W.V.**

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The invisible playmate: W.V. her book & In memory of W.V. by William Canton

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WILLIAM CANTON

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INTRODUCTION

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—
All nature loves a little child."

THIS couplet is from the "Legend of Childhood" in a volume of poems entitled *Comrades*, which Mr. William Canton published after the wonderful and almost too pitiful trilogy of "W. V." here put into one volume. That is a legend to whose transcription he has given himself as no other writer has done in all the recent era of child-literature or child-interpretation; and it is only on perusing again these records, where the chronicler's touch is lighter than down, yet poignant as any in the sad history of the death of kings, that one understands at all where this art that is before art gets its translunary tints and its deceptively wayward style. It may be understood, it cannot be analysed; the critic is lost in the attempt to explain it, and he falls back as he must on rhyme and the rhymed philosophy that the creator and sad remembrancer of "W. V." has supplied in the "Legend of Childhood:" to wit—

" Unnoticed by historian and sage,
These bright-eyed chits have been from age to age
The one supreme majority. I find
Mankind hath been their slaves and womankind
Their worshippers; and both have lived in dread
Of time and tyrants, toiled and wept and bled
Because of some quaint elves they called their own.
Had little ones in Egypt been unknown
No Pharaoh would have had the power, methinks,
To pile the Pyramids or carve the Sphinx."

With Marjorie Fleming, "W. V." lives in a child's region of her own; it may not be a mile from Cloan Den, and on the skirts of the Caledonian Forest. But it is very near mother-earth,*and very close to the stars. The

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effect of reading its memorials in prose and verse is to make one wish their writer would be tempted to turn child chronicler at large, and deal with all the children of history and legend who, like her, never grew up, but remained children for ever.

E. R.

Mr. Canton's published works comprise:—

A Lost Epic, and other Poems, 1887; The Invisible Playmate: a Story of the Unseen, 1894, 1897; W. V., Her Book and Various Verses, 1896; A Child's Book of Saints, 1898, 1902; Children's Sayings, Edited, with a Digression on the Small People, 1900; The True Annals of Fairyland (The Reign of King Herla), 1900, etc.; In Memory of W. V. (Winifred Vida Canton), 1901; Comrades: Poems, Old and New, 1902; What is the Bible Society? 1903; The Story of the Bible Society, 1904; A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1904-1910; Little Hands and God's Book: a Sketch of the Bible Society (1804-1904), 1905; The Bible and the English People, 1911.

