

THE TWILIGHT CASTLE. By Margaret Horton Potter.  
(Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Company. \$1.50.)

WHEN Miss Potter, then only seventeen years old, astonished the polite world with "A Social Lion," — withdrawn from publication at once on account of the notoriety it achieved, — few would have predicted the careful and original work which has since come from her pen. Now, at twenty-one, she is the author of four novels all above the level of mediocrity, without taking into account the first abortive bid for popularity. Perhaps Mary MacLane may yet write something worthy of consideration; though her second book hardly warrants the supposition. Margaret Horton Potter, at least, has justified a career which might have been marred by a first mistake. In her newest novel she gives final evidence of her right to rank among those writers of fiction whose work deserves attention from the reading public.

Her latest story tells of the lives of three brave, lonely women who struggle in vain against the unhappy life of enforced inaction, monotony, and solitude, the lot of the noble lady of the feudal period; and how mutual sympathy, strengthened by common suffering, finally brings to them that content and peace which comes not at any one's call, but only through misfortune bravely and patiently endured. As in "Uncanonized," which dealt with the days of King John, the Catholic Church figures largely in the background of historical basis for "The Twilight Castle," in which the author treats, not too severely nor with inaccuracy, one phase of its influence responsible for much of the tragic romance in mediæval history.

Miss Potter's descriptive work and character delineation are of a high order of excellence. She is, however, inclined to be wordy and often makes the reader impatient by unnecessary repetition. This is emphasized by her lack of humor, of which there is not a ray to lighten the sombre pages of the story. However, the book is not laid down until finished; for it is really interesting and worth while. The opening chapters are very well done. They tell of a young girl's novitiate and taking of the veil. The intense nervous strain, reaction, and breakdown immediately after her vows are said, are described with convincing reality; and the analysis of the awakening of the young woman's passion and desire for life and love, culminating with her surrender to her lover and escape from the convent, is keen in its logic and intuitively strong.

The book is illustrated by six characteristic drawings by Charlotte Weber, and its publishers seem to have spared no pains in the mechanical work of its production.