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1769; the volume of his postdated Poems was published and on sale in 1772; there is no doubt whatsoever that he did not die of syphilis, which destroys a man only after a considerable number of years. As to Burns' discovery of Ferguson, he himself wrote that the date was before March 1782. Matthew McDiarmid (The Poems of Robert Ferguson, STS) cast doubt on this in part because he thought the 1782 edition which Burns owned had not been published by that time. It was actually published (postdated) in August 1781. Dr. MacLaine is right in asserting that the actual influence of Ferguson does not appear until later. Twayne has seen fit to print on the jacket the portrait of least authenticity.

For the sake of accuracy these errors should be mentioned, though they in no way detract from the book. Dr. MacLaine is always interesting, for his style is lucid and concrete. There is no hazy impressionism about his critical reasoning and conclusions, and his enthusiasm for Ferguson endures beyond the end. We should await with eagerness his forthcoming books on Burns and Ramsay.

William Gillis
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The minor writers of a country have an interest quite distinct from the kind of interest evoked by its major writers. All the world knows the great writers, however strongly national, or even local, they may be. The minor writers are known perhaps to only a few devoted enthusiasts who may be inclined to harm their case by idolatry and excessive adulation, yet these minor writers frequently possess quite considerable talent and they often display interesting aspects of the national genius.

In this study of the Findlater sisters — Mary (1865-1965) and Jane Helen (1866-1946) — Eileen Mackenzie maintains a judicious balance, recognizing and assessing the quality of their work and the charm and
interest of their personalities without making extravagant claims for their importance. They were minor novelists, but they wrote with grace and some distinction, and Jane's long short story, A Green Grass Widow, is a sympathetic and telling study of the Perthshire tinker gipsies she knew from her early years in Locheearnhead. We are told enough of their work to whet our appetite for more. Between them the sisters produced twenty-three books, in two of which they collaborated with their friend and near neighbour, Charlotte Stewart of Ardvorlich, who wrote over the pseudonym of Allan McAulay, and with the American writer Kate Douglas Wiggin, the author of Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm. Mary wrote six novels alone, and Jane five, and in collaboration they wrote three novels, of which Crossriggs (1908) has been "generally considered their best work." Though it is a story of Scottish village life, it is not of the Kailyard. The sisters' writings have a stringency which preserves them from the excesses of that school. Their literary lineage is claimed to be "nearest to Miss Ferrier" and "there can be no doubt" that their books, now largely unread, "illuminate a facet of their world as in their time."

Their success in collaboration is the outcome of the intimate personal relationship which existed between the two sisters, and this study, as its subtitle suggests, is as much concerned with friendship as with literature. Among the sisters' many friends and correspondents were Ellen Terry, whom we meet in old age "vague & shabby as a charwoman," Henry and William James—Henry invited the sisters to lunch with him and then forgot the arrangement he had made, so that when they arrived they found they were not expected and he had eaten already, but with William and his wife Alice their relationship was one of "complete ease and felicity"—Sir Edward Grey, reading at Falkirk to the convalescent Mary "a George Meredith novel made the more vivid by [his] enjoyment and hearty laughter," Walter de la Mare, whose eyes were "quite unlike ordinary human eyes, but resembling those of some beautiful wild creature,"—and others who are as perceptively delineated. The Findlater sisters may be minor novelists, but through their writing they had come from the seclusion of a remote Scottish manse to be "known, respected and loved by many of the distinguished and best among their contemporaries."

Of any biographical and critical study one may ask two questions: is it well done? and was it worth doing? The answer to both in this
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case is an emphatic affirmative: indeed, the success and the interest of this study suggest that there may be other minor writers whose life and work might merit and repay similar attention.

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