

Entre Nous.

D. H. S. Nicholson and A. H. E. Lee.

One envies Mr. Nicholson and Mr. Lee the inspiration that came to them—for it was nothing short of that—to edit a volume of mystical poetry. The Clarendon Press accepted it at once, and it was called *The Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse* (6s. net).

But inspiration is painful in its working. When these men of letters began to ask one another what was mysticism they found trouble and sorrow. They could not tell what it was. And they left it untold.

Now that was not wise. Because everyone has some idea of mysticism, and, not finding in the book his own idea and it alone regarded, criticizes it and says this poem and that is not mystical. If the editors had given a definition of mysticism they could have seen to it that all the poetry was mystical according to their definition.

Their plan has been to cast a net on both sides of the ship and gather of all kinds. And so they have included a poem by William Ernest Henley, and offered us other surprises. Of omission the great surprise is only two poems from Christina Rossetti. There was a great rent in the net as it was cast in that direction. In mitigation of the offence let it be said that her brother Dante also furnishes two.

Much space is given to the modern poets—for which sincere thanks. We have the rest on our shelves already. So it is from the moderns that we shall make our selection. The first is by George William Russell (A. E.); the second by Gertrude M. Hort.

RECONCILIATION.

I begin through the grass once again to be bound to the Lord;

I can see, through a face that has faded,
the face full of rest

Of the earth, of the mother, my heart with her heart in accord.

As I lie 'mid the cool green tresses that mantle her breast

I begin with the grass once again to be bound to the Lord.

By the hand of a child I am led to the throne of the King,

For a touch that now fevers me not is forgotten and far,

And His infinite sceptred hands that sway us
can bring

Me in dreams from the laugh of a child to the song of a star.

On the laugh of a child I am borne to the joy of the King.

THANKSGIVING.

I.

Some thank Thee that they ne'er were so forsaken

In dust of death, in whirling gulfs of shame,
But by one kindred soul their part was taken,
One far-off prayer vibrated with their name!
I thank Thee too—for times no man can number,

When I went down the rayless stairs of Hell,
And to my comrades, at their feast or slumber,
The echoes cried: 'All's well!'

II.

Some thank Thee for the stern and splendid vision

Of truth, that never let them shrink or swerve!
Till on their dearest dream they poured derision,
And broke the idols they had sworn to serve!
I thank Thee that, for me, some mystic terror
Still haunts the accustomed shrine, the accustomed way,—

So, though Truth calls me with the mouth of error,

I need not disobey!

E. Wyndham Tennant.

There is amazing variety of subject and of treatment in *Worple Flit and Other Poems*, by E. Wyndham Tennant (Blackwell; 2s. net). There is the joy of country life:

How shall I tell you of the freedom of the Downs?

You who love the dusty life and durance of great towns,

And think the only flowers that please embroider ladies' gowns,

How shall I tell you?

There is the fairy atmosphere, mixing moralities. There is a recollection of the days of the Palmer, the Knight, and the Lady. There is a repetition in verse of a Boccaccio tale—in verse as lucid as his prose. And there is this deeper note:

RE-INCARNATION.

I too remember distant golden days
 When even my soul was young; I see the sand
 Whirl in a blinding pillar towards the band
 Of orange sky-line 'neath a turquoise blaze—
 (Some burnt-out sky spread o'er a glistening land)
 —And slim brown jargoning men in blue and gold,
 I know it all so well, I understand
 The ecstasy of worship ages-old.

Hear the first truth: The great far-seeing soul
 Is ever in the humblest husk; I see
 How each succeeding section takes its toll
 In fading cycles of old memory.
 And each new life the next life shall control
 Until perfection reach Eternity.

H. L. Doak.

Another Irish poet, H. L. Doak, offers a volume of purely war poetry in *Verdun and Other Poems* (Maunsell; 1s. net). It is the heroic in the war that makes the strongest appeal. And there is never a fear that the life which has been greatly given has been thrown away, however early the supreme sacrifice. Moreover, it is good poetry—praise of the worthy and worthy praise. This poem was written at Christmas time 1916.

THE BUILDERS.

War, dolorous war, the angels sing.
 Pity and love are blown away.
 Gone many a loved and lovely thing,
 And many a dream of yesterday.
 But, lo, at work amid the gray,
 Dejected leaves by winter curled—
 Crowned with no transitory bay,
 The builders of a fairer world.

Tragic beyond all imaging
 The tribute strength and beauty pay.
 Come, Babe of Bethlehem, and bring
 Thy succour in a world's dismay.
 Grant us above the midmost fray,
 Where streams the flag of death unfurled,
 By faith to be the dreamers—nay,
 The builders of a fairer world.

Life's hammers on the anvil ring;
 Life's ordinance its sons obey.
 Not in faint-heartedness they fling
 Their bones to silence and decay.
 Death naught avails to dim the ray
 Immortal. Where his blade is whirled,
 Stone upon patient stone they lay—
 The builders of a fairer world.

What though we mourn the valiant clay
 Like chaff upon the darkness hurled,
 Under the eyes of God are they
 The builders of a fairer world.

Augustus H. Cook.

To Dr. Cook, late Senior Surgeon of Hampstead General Hospital, war comes as wounds and suffering and death. Yet he has been able in the heart of it all to see hope and victory. The first and finest poem in *The Happy Warrior* (Bell; 2s. 6d. net) goes by the title of the book, and never suffers by suggesting Wordsworth, for only the title is the same. The second poem shows the way to go. It is called

THE QUEST ACHIEVED.

Must we go forth into the dark? the wind
 moans through the cypress trees,
 And all the glamour of the past melts into
 mournful memories,
 That cluster round the dying hearth, and rob
 the firelight of its glow,
 Till hope and longing softly sleep, like far-off
 dreams of long ago!

Must we go forth into the dark? o'er banks with
 water-lilies wet,
 And lingering, plunge in Lethe's flood, and all
 life's bitterness forget?
 The waving poplar mourns for me, the last
 sad Autumn leaves are shed,
 Through winding paths we travel far, to learn
 that hope itself is dead!

Must we go forth? the dawn breaks chill: like
 flash of jewelled scimitar
 The first pale beam of fainting light is trembling
 to the morning star;
 Strange voices call from out the deep, as
 through the crucible of fire,
 We solve the mystery of the Spheres, and
 reach the land of heart's desire!

But we should like to quote another. For once the
 present war and all it demands of us is forgotten;
 we are taken forward to the great act out of which
 all wars arose, and warned against its fatal facility.

THE FIRST ROMANCE.

Tall and fair as a goddess she gambolled,
 Like a child in her innocent glee,
 Through the forest and meadow she rambled,
 With echoing laughter to see
 Her face in the fount, as she dangled
 The flowers from her shoulder, and knee.

The breezes caressing the river
 Were heavy with odours of may,
 And the mist taught the sunbeams to quiver
 In rainbows as lovely as they
 Who rested, and dreamed of the Giver,
 As perfect and pure as the day.

The ripe fruit hung red in the garden,
 And tempting as roses in June,
 What wonder if Adam should pardon
 The woman who tasted too soon;
 Inhuman the heart that could harden,
 And refuse to partake of such boon.

The serpent was subtle and splendid,
 And, entranced by his sinuous grace,
 Eve lingered, and listened, and ended
 By yielding allegiance, and base
 As the tempter she tempted, and blended
 Her beauty with his to deface!

Alas for the gentle gradation!
 First the eye, then the ear, felt the spell:
 Till she tasted the fruit of temptation,
 She saw, and she heard, and she fell;
 And, deep with the sound of damnation,
 Rang the echoing thunders of Hell!

Hushed the song of the birds in the forest,
 Swift the blackness as dark as the tomb,
 Shed as sign of the sin thou abhorrest,
 Hurried harbinger horrid of doom,
 O thou Angel of Death! as thou drawest
 Thy sword from his scabbard of gloom!

Didst thou blast with thy lightnings the
 sinner?
 Was she crushed, as she crept to the
 side
 Of the husband, who perished to win her?
 Choosing death as the dower of his bride;
 As they wandered from Eden together
 From the face of their Father, and died?

Nay, sometimes they smiled in their sorrow,
 As they toiled in the sweat of their brow,
 Such a smile as the Angels might borrow,
 As they feel Thy forgiveness, and bow;
 And the wife and the husband to-morrow
 Shall be pure as their Saviour and Thou!

But sweet as the odours of Edom,
 When purged from their sorrow and pain,
 As they roam in the joy of their freedom,
 Comes the sound of the *children's* refrain;
 As a pledge of His promised redemption,
 And the wilderness blossoms again!

E. H. W. Meyerstein.

E. H. W. Meyerstein is another of the Oxford poets who has found a place in that coveted series 'Adventures All.' The title is *The Witches' Sabbath* (Blackwell; 2s. net), and three-fourths of the volume is occupied with the dramatic poem which gives the book that title. It can be neither quoted nor described. The world, the flesh, and the devil are all in it; the only absentee is God. But here is God also, in this short poem near the end, and very impressively:

THE BUILDING.

All souls are clay save One that rears
 Each in gradation to the sky
 Until the shapen whole appears
 A rapture in Eternity.

Clay's dead, yet bears alive and quick
 A seed that in the kiln expands,
 Warming the substance into brick
 Before it touch the mason's hands.

Such bricks throughout the building serve
 For wall and ceiling, arch and stair
 And dome whose imperfect curve
 Sits like an eagle on the air.

Each doth his portion due sustain,
 Nor shall as first or last be known,
 The merest parapet doth reign
 Co-equal with the cornerstone.

And each a different hue bewrays
 Until the sacred work be done,
 When all that now perplex the gaze
 Shall gleam indissolubly one.

The angels then shall dance around
 Upon the sealing of the dome,
 And welcome with eternal sound
 The Master to his breathing home.