

Murray's verses are full of natural magic, and bear the classical stamp of which Richard Le Gallienne, in his criticism of Murray, says: "When poetry has it, it can never quite die. The world at large may for get it, but there will always be a warm corner for it in the heart of the student of poetry; that is to say, a warm corner in the warmest heart."

Lionel Johnson is a poet who deserves mention for this, if for no other cause, that he is one who upholds the great and noble tradition of the past in opposition to the "modern," and socialistic, tendencies of many of the writers and poets of to-day.

Johnson was educated at St. Mary's College, Winchester, to which we find constant reference throughout his poems. He is proud of being "a Wykehamist come of Wykehamists." He went later to New College, Oxford. He is an English Roman Catholic, but strong in his loyalty to "England's excellence." Previous to the publication of his poems, in 1895, he had contributed several striking pieces of verse to the "Book of the Rhymers Club," and also published an essay in criticism called "The Art of Thomas Hardy." It is with his poems, however, that we are chiefly concerned, a limited edition of which (750 copies) appeared in 1895, and is now somewhat rare.

Lionel Johnson is above all "a poet's poet," but this fact does not detract at all from the charm of his verse. As an example of his old-time loyalty, nothing better can be cited than his lines "To the Statue of King Charles at Charing Cross."

Sombre and rich, the skies;
Great glooms and starry plains.
Gently the night-wind sighs;
Else a vast silence reigns.

The splendid silence clings
Around me: and around
The saddest of all kings
Crowned, and again disrowned.

Comely and calm he rides
Hard by his own Whitehall:
Only the night-wind glides;
No crowds, nor rebels, brawl.

Gone, too, his court: and yet,
The stars his courtiers are:
Stars in their stations set;
And every wandering star.

Alone he rides, alone,
The fair and fatal king:
Dark night is all his own,
That strange and solemn thing.

Which are more full of fate:
The stars; or those sad eyes?
Which are more still and great:
Those brows; or the dark skies?

What could be nobler or higher than the tribute of such a poem?

In another place we get a charming picture of an English sea-port, somewhat idealized, it is true, but yet not too much so:—

Harbours of swaying masts,
Beneath the vesper star:
Each high-swung lantern casts
A quivering ray afar.

From round the ancient quay,
Ring songs with rough refrains:
Strong music of the sea,
Chaunted in lusty strains.

Freshness of early spray,
Blown on me off the sea:
Morning breaks chilly gray,
And storm is like to be.

A light prow plunger: red,
Red as the ruddy sand,
The tall sail fills: well sped,
The fair boat leaves the land."

He is English above all else, and one of the longest poems in his book is devoted to a series of pictures of the English and he concludes:

"These joys and such as these,
Are England's and are mine."

His poetry is distinguished by its harmonious rhythm and smoothness, and it has a dignity and sweetness of its own which appeals to the lover of true poetry. In conclusion I will quote his short poem, "The Bells," which has a spirit of wistfulness and enquiry about it:—

"From far away! from far away!
But whence, you will not say:
Melancholy bells, appealing chimes,
Voices of lanes and times!

Your toll, O melancholy bells!
Over the valley swells:
O touching chimes! your dying sighs
Travel our tranquil skies.

But whence? And whither fade away
Your echoes from our day?
You take our hearts with gentle pain,
Tremble, and pass again.

Could we lay hold upon your haunts,
The birthplace of your chaunts:
Were we in dreamland, deathland, then?
We, sad and wondering men?"

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N. M. T.