

## A NEW BOOK OF POEMS.

BY J. E. WETHERELL.

Additions to Canadian poetic literature have been of late both numerous and notable. In the autumn of last year, lovers of poetry were favored with volumes of verse by Mr. Roberts, Mr. Carman, Mr. Campbell, and Mr. D. C. Scott. Now comes to hand a dainty little volume by Frederick George Scott\*. This is Mr. Scott's third venture on the perilous sea of letters, his earlier books being "The Soul's Quest"—a volume of verse—and "Elton Hazlewood," a novel of much merit. An author who has passed muster creditably on two former occasions, and has given promise of better things to come, cannot but pique the reviewer's curiosity when public attention is challenged for the third time. Let us look at the quality of Mr. Scott's latest work.

The first thing that strikes the attention of the reader is that Mr. Scott's is essentially an old-world voice. It is true that the poet is a Canadian, having been born in Montreal a little over thirty years ago, but hereditary influence, education, a sojourn of some years in England, and his rectorial life (in Drummondville, Quebec), all have kept his tone essentially English. There is scarcely a poem or a stanza in this book that might not have been written in England by an Englishman. Yes, even the beautiful poem, "In the Woods" (p. 89), one of the few nature-lyrics Mr. Scott has given us, might have been written by an Englishman—even the lines :—

"and the white snow lying  
Pencilled with shadows of bare boughs above."

Although Canadian-born, Mr. Scott is too cosmopolitan to be a Canadian. Some one has wittily defined a cosmopolitan as "one who is at home even in his own country." But here we have a poet who will not even be so cosmopolitan as that. He is indigenous in birth and exotic in bloom. Even his favorite birds are the ubiquitous and clamorous English sparrows (avaunt with them!)—

"The sparrows are my matin-bell,  
Each day my heart rejoices.  
When, from the trellis where they dwell,  
They call me with their voices."

One would like to believe that the poet's darlings are song-sparrows, or even chipping-sparrows, but "the trellis where they dwell" dispels such a kind supposition. *Passer domesticus* has a favorite place to dwell, and worst of all—he has a distinctive "voice."

Having said that Mr. Scott is quite insularly English, one has said almost the only representative thing to be said of him, and that is a venial fault, for there are more dreadful things among authors than to be bred English to the marrow of the bones. Only one is a little disappointed by the absence of all native flavor from poems which probably owe very much to native environment.

Nearly all the poems in this book have appeared during the last six years in Canadian journals, and some of them have attracted much attention. Readers of *The Week* will remember the virile and haunting poem, "Samson" (p. 4). Ah, the horror of it !

"Day by day the mould I smell  
Of this fungus-blistered cell ;  
Nightly in my haunted sleep  
O'er my face the lizards creep."

Gyves of iron scrape and burn  
Wrists and ankles when I turn,  
And my collared neck is raw  
With the teeth of brass that gnaw."

And the splendid strength of it !

"Give me splendor in my death—  
Not this sick'ning dungeon breath,  
Creeping down my blood like slime,  
Till it wastes me in my prime."

Give me back for one blind hour,  
Half my former rage and power,  
And some giant crisis send,  
Meet to prove a hero's end."

Then, O God, Thy mercy show—  
Crush him in the overthrow,  
At whose life they scorn and point,  
By its greatness out of joint."

Mr. Scott's characteristic quality is strength. He delights in all forms and

\*"My Lattice, and other Poems," by Frederick George Scott. — William Briggs, Toronto.