

## Contributions.

### TWO ENGLISH MINOR POETS.

There is at present, and has been for some time past, in England and Scotland, a numerous class of what are known as "minor poets." These are, generally speaking, young men of more or less literary ability, who produce verses which, though they cannot be placed in the first rank of poetry, are yet very often of high merit. It is of the poetry of two such men that I wish to speak here; one of these is the late Robert F. Murray, and the other is Lionel Johnson.

Murray was not what is known in Fleet Street as a "literary success," and he did not go out of his way to be one. As Richard Le Gallienne says, "he had a genuine indifference to fame and was quite content to be known as the poet of his university town of St. Andrews." St. Andrews had for him indeed a fascination, which no other place possessed; he could not live away from it, try as he could, and always returned to live there in the end. Murray died when he was but thirty years of age with a promising future before him for few, if any, of the younger English poets, showed such talent as he who was known as "the Poet of 'The Scarlet Gown.'" Murray's poems have recently been admirably edited, with a charming introductory sketch of the poet, and his work, by Mr. Andrew Lang, and this little book should be known to all lovers of good English verse.

What strikes one most in reading Murray's poems is their charming simplicity. He deals with "the love of simple natural persons," and deals with it in such a way, that we are unconsciously carried back in thought to the seventeenth century lyrics. What, for example, can be sweeter than the following:—

#### AT A HIGH CEREMONY.

"Not the proudest damsel here  
Looks so well as does my dear.  
All the borrowed light of dress  
Outshining not her loveliness,

A loveliness not born of art,  
But growing outwards from her heart,  
Illuminating all her face,  
And filling all her form with grace.

Said I, of dress the borrowed light  
Could rival not her beauty bright?  
Yet looking round, 'tis truth to tell,  
No damsel here is dressed so well."

In his love songs we find an under-current of longing and wistfulness, what one critic calls "the unsatisfied incompleteness which marks the rest of his life," and which the love songs I am about to quote show to the fullest extent:

"I feel so lonely,  
I long once only  
To pass an hour  
With you O sweet!  
To touch your fingers,  
Where fragrance lingers  
From some rare flower,  
And kiss your feet.

But not this even  
To me is given.  
Of all sad mortals  
Most sad am I,  
Never to meet you,  
Never to greet you,  
Nor pass your portals  
Before I die."

And again in the beautiful lyric of

#### "HOPE DEFERRED."

"When the weary night is fled,  
And the morning sky is red,  
Then my heart doth rise and say,  
'Surely she will come to-day.'

In the golden blaze of noon,  
'Surely she is coming soon'  
In the twilight, 'Will she come?'  
Then my heart with fear is dumb.

When the night wind in the trees  
Plays its mournful melodies,  
Then I know my trust is vain,  
And she will not come again."

Some of Murray's poems strike a lighter vein however, and Mr. Lang seems to consider his *vers de société* very highly, saying that Murray, compared to Calverley or J. K. S., was "endowed with their humor, their skill in parody, their love of youth, but (if I am not prejudiced) with more than the tenderness and natural magic of these regretted writers." Space forbids that I should give any lengthy quotation so I will simply quote the following sparkling epigram, peculiarly fitted to appear in this article, entitled "A Coincidence":—

"Every critic in the town  
Runs the minor poet down;  
Every critic—don't you know it?—  
Is himself a minor poet."