

number.* It is nearly three years since the author, Arthur J. Stringer, attended lectures in University College, but he is still, no doubt, proud to be called an undergraduate. To all readers he is known by his poems, which have during the past few years appeared in great number in the Canadian press, as a prolific writer of verse—verse that is always perfect in detail and of exquisite artistic finish, even though the thought be sometimes little more than ordinary. The fact, however, that none of these newspaper waifs are acknowledged in either of the volumes he has published, goes to prove that they who know Arthur Stringer only through these verses do not know him as, in his serious poetic mood, he deserves to be known. They are the practice exercises of his art—creations of the hour, for the hour. But to not a few of the students Mr. Stringer is personally known. I, myself, with a dozen more undergraduates I could name, sat with him in the Collegiate Institute—in “de ole fift,” as the form was called—beneath, I believe, the most inspiring teacher that ever entered an Ontario high school. And if he owes his success in the field of literature to anything else than to his own poetic fire, his study, practice and patient perseverance, I feel sure it is to the true literary spirit and the love of the beautiful that was early instilled into him by Mr. M. F. Libby.

When, some two years ago, Mr. Stringer's first volume† appeared, it was the four or five epigrams it contained that received the most flattering comment. Much else there was in the book to praise, some beautiful lyrics and descriptive verses, and many pretty conceits of the imagination, but none of them so won the favor of the critics, as his four lines on “The Anarchist”:

“From out her golden palace, Fortune thrust

A maddened dog, whose mouth foamed white with hate;
And loud he howled, and gnawed the courtyard dust,

And ground his teeth upon the iron gate.”

Four such lines might well win words of praise for any book. His epigrams on the “Sick Man,” “Remorse,” and “Elusion,” all of which are reprinted in the new volume, have also been frequently quoted. One has only to watch the pages of the magazines to see that the tendency of modern verse is towards epigram. An epigram may be read between two mouthfuls of porridge, and that bad habit into which we have lately fallen, of reading at the breakfast table—a habit bad from the point of view of literary taste and social etiquette, though physicians assure us it is very helpful for our digestions—seems to make this the test of acceptability in poetry nowadays. Every year the dust is gathering thicker on the epics and didactics, till it seems as though the only poet, who will be able to hold the attention of the busy man of the future, will be the writer of the lyric and the epigram. Feeling, no doubt, that this was the inevitable tendency of our literature, and naturally encouraged by the success of those verses in his earlier book, Mr. Stringer has published a new volume, containing, in the form of some forty epigrams, the choicest gems of his thought for the last two years.

To give any intelligent idea of this little book, or to do its author justice without quoting from it, would be difficult, but it is still more difficult, if one does quote at all, to refrain from quoting everything that lies between the prologue and the epilogue; for everything in the volume, as should be the case with every volume of epigrams, is extremely quotable. Equally difficult would it be to say which one of these forty gems is the brightest, though, for my part, I do not think any of them can surpass “The Anarchist.” Besides this and the verses on “Remorse,” “Elusion” and “The Sick Man,” which are

reprinted in the late volume practically as they appeared in the first, there are to be found in the smooth-flowing lines of the epigrams many echoes of his earlier song. The idea in “The Tree Sparrow in Autumn” is to be found in his lines to “Canadian Poets.” His earlier lines on “Captivity Outlived” have plainly suggested not only the thought, but even the words of his two epigrams on “Philosophies” and “Captivity.” The latter is one of the best in the present volume, showing, as it does, a breadth and freedom and love for activity that augurs well for the poet's future.

“Weep not for him, he hates his cage too well,—

Gnawing the very bars that bind him so.

Pity here one who grows to love his cell,

And when his freedom comes is loath to go.”

This breadth and freedom Mr. Stringer carries with him into the realm of theology. Science and nature are his gods.

“There are no gods to-day. We mourn them not;

For in their old time, far-off fastnesses

They pierced secluded, while man climbed in pain

The height he stands upon, though still in pain,

Uncheered by any voice of any gods.

For tongue of god was never heard by man,

Except when sounded by a woodland bird,

Or murmured by the wind or running stream,

Or in some sound of nature, fugitive,

Forever faint, incomprehensible.

Yet why misname the music of the world?

We never dream divine its sounds unmusical.

Gods are the shadowings of man; think not

That man is but the shadow of the gods.”

These lines, taken from his “Watchers of Twilight,” might be supplemented by many others of similar tone from the same poem—a poem in which Mr. Stringer sets forth at some length his theological creed. But, that this creed is not altogether orthodox, might be easily inferred without appealing to the evidence of his earlier volume from several of the Epigrams. For example, “Worship”:

“Our dream-gods wane, and strange gods come;

We bend, where gods may once have dwelt,

Our puzzled knee, and find them dumb.

Enough! We know that we have knelt.”

His lines on “The Suicide” might also be quoted in this connection:

“He bided not God's time!—yet God took note,

That rather not in such a part, 't was best

To face the open sea, and swim or float

Beneath the stars, and leave with Him the rest.”

But in the limited space at the writer's disposal it would be impossible to do Mr. Stringer justice. Next week the excellencies of this clever volume will be considered at greater length. BRIAN BORU.

The lectures, under the auspices of the University Glee Club, delivered by Mr. E. A. Hayes, Principal of the School of Vocal Science, of New York, were attended by large audiences, the hall being unable to accommodate all who desired admission. At the first one, on Monday night, President Loudon occupied the chair. Mr. Hayes, who is a man of striking appearance and good ability as a lecturer, appeared to deeply interest his audience with his treatment of the physiological laws governing singing. Voice production was considered as a scientific matter. On Tuesday afternoon the subject of the lecture was “Beauty of Tone; its physical clauses.” Not only had there to be vibration of the vocal chords to produce the full volume and beauty of the voice, but also all the muscles and ligaments used in tone production had to be got into vibration. Prof. Ramsay Wright, M.A., B.Sc., occupied the chair.

* Epigrams—By Arthur J. Stringer, author of “Watchers of Twilight” and other poems. T. H. Warren, London, Ont. 1896. Price, 50c.

† “Watchers of Twilight and Other Poems”—By Arthur J. Stringer. T. H. Warren, London, Ont., 1897.