

acknowledged to exist, must be compensated for by the value and beauty of the matter; which value and beauty themselves may chance to be all but non-existent. And at best, how rarely is it realized that in so subtle a creation as song half the matter indeed is the manner. Body and soul are by no means so thoroughly made one as are language and thought in poetry; by no means so potently do they act and re-act upon each other as do the word and the idea in song. It would be genius sublime indeed that could afford to display itself always in slovenly verse. But the fact is that in slovenly verse sublime genius is hidden, not displayed. Great poets, it is true, have written slovenly verse; it was just then their genius was at fault.

A young poet therefore who is essentially an artist, reverencing deeply his art, and master of all its technicalities, should attract our most earnest regard. Such a poet is Mr. Edgar Fawcett. Never falling into the snare of sound for sweet sound's sake only, his pregnant lines are nevertheless harmonious as though his sole aim were harmony. Like Keats, he is enamoured of fine phrases. His phrases, too, like those of Keats and unlike those of many verbal gymnasts, are really fine, ring true, have a solid substance to them. The fine phrases that Keats loved, full of sweetness and colour, and perfume and music, are scarcely even akin to those sonorous collocations of words which one of the greatest of living poets delights sometimes to string for us, which not seldom seem to us

"Like a tale of little meaning, though the words are strong."

Mr. Fawcett's phrases are moulded with nicest skill; he makes them rich and delicious, fit to be rolled under the tongue; but each has a reason for being; each is vitalized with an idea. All through Mr. Fawcett's volume published in 1878 under the name of "Fantasy and Passion," is perceptible this high technical skill, this mastery of words, and above all this subtle essence of poetry. Certain lines bring a feeling of velvety richness on the lips repeating them. For example:

"Within her vaporous robe and one dim hand
Much asphodel and lotus doth she bear."

Of which the last line is one that the tongue is reluctant to let cease. The sonnet containing these lines is entitled "Sleep," and was written for a picture. Perhaps it is not too much to say that it has but one superior in the whole range of English pictorial sonnets. It has greater unity, is less exclamatory, than that marvellous one by Rossetti, "For a Venetian Pastoral," which is surely the most perfect sonnet-music in the language. This poem will serve to display very many of Mr. Fawcett's characteristics. Here in are well instanced the artistic perfection of rhythm, the well-linked music of language that he knows how to create. As a colourist also his faculty shows itself. He has a clear appreciation of values; his quietest and most subdued tone is instinct with the glow of vitality. Here, too, we perceive the definiteness and reach of his imagination; the clearness of his vision and of his rendering of the vision; his excellent sense of proportion.

Not alone in the sonnets, but in that charming group of songs entitled "Minor-chords" is Mr. Fawcett's symmetry of design displayed to advantage. Each of these poems, however brief, is complete, rounded and justly developed. Most of them being the outcome of close and loving study of this or that of the surrounding objects of nature, dramatic intensity is not herein to be looked for; but intensity and keenness of search—these are well evident. Nor is it here we should expect the utterance of passionate thought; though one or two of these small master-pieces are aglow with heat of passion held in check. They are filled, too, with the charm of suggestiveness; scarcely a poem but brings some new thought; some strange analogy, to haunt the brain after reading it. Instance the following stanza from "A Tuberose":—

"Or did the moon, through some sweet night long dead,
Her splendour shed
On some rich tomb, while silence held its breath,
Till one pure sculptured blossom thrilled and grew
Strangely to you,
Cold child of moonbeams, marble and white death!"

Or the following beautiful fancy:—

"Down in the dim swamp, firefly throngs
A brilliant, soundless revel keep,
As though beneath their radiant rain
Another Danaë slept her sleep!"

But for proofs that Mr. Fawcett can interpret, not only external nature even in his subtlest manifestations, but also the palimpsest of human passion and thought, we must turn to that division of his work entitled "Voices and Visions." "The House on the Hill," the initial poem of this division, is a form of song in which success is difficult. It is an episode of passion and heart-ruin under the common light of the present day and life. In form and subject not unlike some work of the younger Lytton, it is as much superior to that clever writer's productions as sincerity, simplicity, and strength might be expected to make it. There is never a cynical touch to make one ashamed of his emotion, or the hollow ring to remind one that his breathless sympathy is all for the fiction of a poet's idle brain. There is no raving, no attitudinizing; but the story is briefly told, with vigour and directness, and its pathos of governed pain is deep and enduring.

—And let him keep my hand, as I said
"The truth is better. Good-night! Good-bye!"

What seem to be so far Mr. Fawcett's most ambitious efforts are "Jael" and "Violante," in blank verse. These are eminently strong and impressive dramatic poems, worthy of most attentive study. Perhaps somewhat more impressive than pleasing—save that penetrative imagination and forcible utterance of necessity give pleasure to the intellect; they stimulate thought and conjecture, to a high degree. "Violante" reminds one some-

what of Rossetti's splendid poem "The Last Confession." "Jael" is grandly conceived, disturbing and then satisfying the imagination. It represents a sumptuous development of woman, inexorably self-held in stern restraint. The sinewy verse, admirably adapted to the subject-matter, is slightly marred, however, by the prevalence of redundant syllables giving the lines a restless and tumultuous character.

—"close

I have drawn the curtains of my tent and shut
Heaven's vague supremities and the twilight moon,
Palm-gilding, from mine eyes. I would that doors
Of massive metal dulled your grateful songs
To me, lying prone, veiled with my loosened hair,
An agony in my thoughts, and loathing life."

* * * * *

"Thou knowest of how the quick pulse ruled my heart
When Sisera was near, yet how I have made
Face, form, and gesture one cold courtesy
Of decorous matron-hood severely pure,
Acting until the last my virtuous lie,
Feeling the insolent animal in my veins
Gnaw at its bonds with fiery teeth. . . ."

* * * * *

"Sing on,

Barak and Deborah, bless the Kenite's wife,
Who thrust the deadly nail in Sisera's brow,
Who strove to free not Israel, but herself;
Who failed. . . ."

But the poem, in some respects the most remarkable of the whole collection, is a short lyric entitled "Behind History." The unrestricted praise which is so often applied to Browning's "My Lost Duchess," may with justice be applied to this. It is in a high degree forcible, keen in analysis, intensely dramatic, polished *ad unguem*, pure from all obscurity in spite of its exquisite compactness; and indeed, for so many excellences quite so excellently combined, one may make long search elsewhere.

"I am the Queen they hold so pure,
They will carve my tomb one day, be sure,
With marble praise that shall endure."

In this Queen the flood of a fierce and tyrannous passion rises against the rock of her indomitable pride. The flood, as is usual with floods of this sort, prevails against the rock, overwhelms and covers it. But the tide ebbs more swiftly than it rose; and the rock, taking pitiless vengeance, stands apparently inviolable, as before. There is contained in this poem what most writers would require a volume to render. By masterly suggestiveness and lucidity of expression Mr. Fawcett has included every thing; he has taken in the whole world of a surging and destructive passion. Yet the marvellous condensation is accomplished apparently with perfect ease, with no trace of the "labour to be brief."

To mention merely a few more poems representing the variety of Mr. Fawcett's powers, let me call attention to the grim weirdness of "D'outre Mort"—desire surviving death; the cruel gorgeousness and stealthy tropic heat of "Tiger to Tigress"; above all, the tender human pitifulness, the long-drawn lamenting music, the inexpressible loneliness of the lovely "Cradle-song." A "Barcarolle," though somewhat artificial, has a delightful lilt. "A Souvenir" is delicious slow music; and "One May Night," is brimming with richness and soft passion and warm colour. In this poem, as in one or two others, we are reminded that Mr. Fawcett has studied systematically the genius of Mr. Aldrich. But the poetry of Mr. Aldrich, truly exquisite and jewel-like at its best, is occasionally, I think, refined to the verge of finicalness. This perilous verge Mr. Fawcett shuns with care.

The foregoing extracts and comments have shown Mr. Fawcett crowned already with brilliant and solid achievement, the author of work endowed with strength, subtlety, and sensuousness. Possessed also of the singing-voice, the artist's intolerance of slovenly workmanship, and an unerring sense of proportion, Mr. Fawcett should fulfil the most sanguine expectations. His defects have not been dwelt upon here, because, unlike his excellences, they are distinctly of the minor sort. A few of his lyrics lack their full share of inspiration, having been written perhaps more as a metrical exercise than under strong compulsion of creative desire. Here and there, also, a pet word gets more than its share of attention. But matter for blame, on the whole, is conspicuous chiefly by its absence.

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THE CHURCHES.

A MOVEMENT which has made considerable progress in England has been introduced into Canada. The White Cross Army has for its object the promotion of purity, and fostering true respect for woman. A branch has been organized in connection with St. Thomas Church, Hamilton.

DOM SMEULDERS, the Papal delegate to Canada, has paid a visit to Ottawa, where he presided at the convocation of University College, laid the corner stone of the new building, and made several addresses. It is hinted that the solution of the Laval difficulty will be brought about by making Ottawa the seat of the chief Catholic educational institution in Canada. The Pope is supposed to favour this plan.

THE Spurgeon jubilee must have been very gratifying to the minister of the Metropolitan tabernacle and his many friends. In addition to the many kind things said of him by the Earl of Shaftesbury, and others, a cheque for \$22,500 was handed him which will be expended exclusively