

all quarters and in much of the work has had able assistants in making the selections and writing the explanatory notes. We are glad to see that the work has on the whole been so well accomplished. There is a breezy naturalness about the introductions as if one should say, "Here is an old friend of mine. I am sorry you have not met him before, but I am sure you will be delighted with his company;" but just when we think we are dropping into "the hail-fellow well met style" we are surprised to find critical and appreciative remarks of the greatest value expressed in a manner worthy of—perhaps instead of seeking a comparison it will be sufficient to say—of Mr. Stead at his best. The quotations already given with its metaphors of shop-dressing and dog-drowning will illustrate the appeal to the "man in the street," in his own tongue. The following, which occurs in the first volume of selections from Wordsworth, is, as will be seen at once, of a distinctly higher order. "One great charm of poetry is its endless diversity. It is as various as Nature which inspires it, and which in return it reflects as in a mirror. Wordsworth is different from any poet whose verse has hitherto appeared in this series. If Chaucer may be said to be the poet of the day dawn, Shakespeare of the busy life of early morn, and Milton of the spacious afternoon, Wordsworth is the poet of the meditative hour that is passed in the light of setting suns. There is something of sunset calm in the poetry of this High Priest of Nature. The fret of the busy day is but a reminiscence to be recalled at will. Wordsworth's dwelling amid the tranquil silences of Nature looks out with the serious wisdom of a philosopher upon the sins and sorrows, the joys and disappointments of the world of men." Those who prepare annotated editions of the poets for young people may, perhaps, feel that their fastidious taste is outraged by some of Mr. Stead's remarks and comparisons, but it may be that they could learn something from him in the way of suppressing superfluous notes, grappling only with real difficulties and allowing the author to have as much as possible of the scholar's attention.

We have mentioned Clough as a comparatively little-known poet. We cannot attempt now an account of the long poem with the Celtic name, but venture to quote one of the shorter poems, which probably is not too well known, although it is one Mr. Stedman gives in his "Victorian Anthology":

IN A LECTURE-ROOM.

Away, haunt not thou me,
Thou vain Philosophy,
Little hast thou bestead,
Save to perplex the head,
And leave the spirit dead.
Unto thy broken cisterns wherefore go,
While from the secret treasure-depths below,
Fed by the skyly shower
And clouds that sink and rest on hill-tops high,
Wisdom at once, and power,
Are welling, bubbling forth, unseen, incessantly?
Why labour at the dull, mechanic oar,
When the fresh breeze is blowing,
And the strong current flowing,
Right onward to the eternal shore.

This series consists of forty-eight small volumes, well printed, on coarse, strong paper, and neatly bound in a stout paper cover; sold at the modest price of one penny each. As already between two and three million copies have been disposed of, it is evident that there are many people who, if they cannot afford to buy expensive books, are glad to get good literature when it is brought within the reach of the poorest. It is not our present business to moralize upon the power of literature and the influence of poetry, as we think we may safely assume that it is a good thing in this age of "penny dreadfuls" and "shilling shockers" to popularize "the masterpieces of poetic" literature. The series extends from Chaucer to William Morris, author of the "Earthly Paradise," etc., who died a few weeks ago. Mr. Morris was the only living poet included; the works of recent poets, as Tennyson and Browning, were not available on account of the copyright. Out of the forty-eight volumes, seven give selections from the works of the following American poets: Longfellow, Emerson, Lowell, Poe, Bryant, Whittier, and Whitman. On this point two remarks may be made (1) It seems strange that Mr. Stead, who is in his way a strong "Imperialist," did not take this favourable opportunity of introducing some specimen of Canadian poetry to the notice of English readers; and (2) One wonders what the "man in the street" will make of Whitman, who tells him

"How beautiful and perfect are the animals
How perfect the earth and the minutest thing upon it.
What is called good is perfect, and what is
Called bad is just as perfect."

Even if the Englishman can manage to find either sense or poetry in this, he can hardly be expected to enter into Whitman's enthusiasm for the "American idea." However, the editor is quite prepared to champion Whitman and to show further that in his admiration for "the good, grey poet" he is in good company.

Among these "immortals" Shakespeare is represented by three plays and Scott by three poems; Milton by his volumes of selections from "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained"; Wordsworth has two volumes, and so has Matthew Arnold; while Byron and Burns have one each. Tom Hood contributes "poems grave and gay," and Coleridge gives us almost all of his verse that is of importance. Dryden, Pope, Grey, Goldsmith, Keats, Collins, receive due recognition; and altogether, considering the purpose of the series, the best of British and American poetic literature is skilfully "sampled." In these days of "women's rights" some of the fair sex may think that there is just cause of complaint in the fact that only two volumes out of forty-eight are devoted to them, and these are monopolized by Mrs. Hemans, Mrs. Browning, and Eliza Cook.

At the risk of giving too much space to what some may think a small matter, we feel constrained to note one or two special features of this popular series. Occasionally the editor has hit a good idea; for instance, in making the selections from Cowper sufficient variety has been given, ranging from John Gilpin to "God moves in a mysterious way," to afford a comprehensive view of the poet's work, and at the same time it has been found possible to include all the poems of that author on animals. Thus one section of the man's work is complete, and that one which is likely to have a humanizing influence, and at the same time show the timid poet in a natural and beautiful light. Again, the small volume of selections from Burns is judiciously done, and at the end of the book is a glossary of the more difficult Scotch words; such provision is absolutely necessary if people in the South of England or even the "children of Scotch people in Canada are to understand and enjoy Scotland's greatest bard. Very interesting is the attempt to popularise the "Apostle of Culture," in the preface to the first volume of Matthew Arnold's poems we read: "Few of the numbers of the Masterpiece Library have been issued with more fear and trembling than this, which for the first time places the poetry of Matthew Arnold within the reach of the masses of the people. For Matthew Arnold has never been in any sense a popular poet. He sang to a limited and cultured audience. That audience, though few, is appreciative rather than enthusiastic, and its approval affords little or no indication as to how the polished verses of this apostle of culture will be received by the literary shepherd in the Australian bush, or the clerk and the artisan in the crowded cities." This first volume contains, besides the selected poems, an introduction, evidently written by some one (a lady we are told) well versed on the subject, in which the question is discussed, "Why Arnold has not hitherto been a 'popular' poet," and an attempt is made to state clearly the "formative influences" of his life, and the message of his character and thought. Later on a second volume was published in the same series, entitled "The Scholar-Gipsy and Other Poems," and a sale within less than six months of 200,000 copies of Arnold's poems was regarded as evidence that "the multitude is capable of appreciating poetry which has hitherto been regarded as the exclusive luxury of the cultured few." We must not now indulge in much quotation, but there may be space at least for this short sad song:

REQUIESCAT.

Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew!
In quiet she reposes:
Ah! would that I did too!

Her mirth the world required:
She bath'd it in amules of glee,
But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound,
But for peace her soul was yearning
And now peace laps her round.