

T. E. BROWN.

A Minor Poet with a Streak of Genius in Him.

POEMS BY T. E. BROWN. Selected and Arranged, with an Introduction and Notes, by H. F. B. and H. G. D. (Golden Treasury Series). 16mo, pp. xlii, 284. The Macmillan Company.

The minor poet, most harassed of all literary types, is constantly being asked to put into his work merits which are rare enough anywhere. He is apt to retort that he is asked for too much. Yet the chief demand made upon him is not at all severe—it is simply that he should be himself. The trouble with the minor poet is usually that he tries to be somebody else, to use ideas and a style really foreign to his nature. He works from the outside. There is no bubbling spring of music to be divined from his laboriously polished lines. Perhaps if he were to let himself go it would be discovered that he had, after all, no poetry in him. That would be sad, but at any rate the experiment would be worth making. Perhaps, too, by thus putting himself to the test, he might win thus at least a leaf of laurel. That was the experience of the late T. E. Brown. He was a minor poet, a fact which is in no wise obscured by the inclusion of his writings in the "Golden Treasury Series." But within his limits he was genuine, a man with swiftly coursing blood in his veins, honest thoughts in his head and a perfect will-honesty to write as he was moved to write. Absolutely sincere, he developed almost unconsciously a very personal and engaging gift. Though he was not, either in prose or in verse, quite the writer he was taken to be by the late W. E. Henley and other devoted friends, there was unmistakably a streak of genius in his make-up.

His personality and career are easily outlined in a few words. He was born in 1830, the son of a clergyman presiding over a church in the Isle of Man. The parish schoolmaster began his education, which was continued and rounded out at Oxford. There he was well grounded in the classics and altogether fitted to assume the headmastership of the school at Gloucester, with which he became associated as a young man. A large part of his life was given to educational duties. Then he appears to have won his freedom, retiring to a happy existence in the island of his birth. He made friends with his fellows and put the emotions inspired in him by them and by nature into verses of varying quality. The first of these to be published in a book appeared some thirty-five years ago. It was not until after his death, in 1897, that the printing of his letters and his collected poems drew general attention to his talent. The manner of man he was may be gathered from this passage in the introduction to the present volume:

Physically, though not tall, Brown gave one the impression of a very big man. He had a slow sort of urgent walk, like a leviathan pressing through the floods. His voice was rich and deep, the face extremely mobile, the mouth slightly ironical, the eyes of a most winning kindness. "Love-deep" eyes, to use one of his own happy phrases. He was fond of boating, bathing, but above all of interminable long rambles. His spirits were high when he was in them; his fun, his humor, his mimicry, rose to the pitch of rollicking at times; "one felt that bed was almost an impossibility; one had been so awakened all over by possibility; one had been so wakened all over by laughter. Brown's wild spirits, his loud peals of schoolboy merriment, his boisterous, almost schoolboy fun," to quote a friend's report of an evening passed in his company. But beneath this bubbling fountain of mirth, which was only intermingled, lay a deep well of tenderness, sigh to tears. Indeed, tears and laughter were very close to each other in Brown's temperament. He styled himself "a born sobber," and admits that he has to battle with the *hysteria passio*. Such a diathesis was inevitable in one so profoundly and humanely tender, so sensitive to the inrush of nature, so conscious, like all fine poets, of the *sermo sermum*. It was there and could not be wiped, but the *passio* was corrected and curbed by a rich ironical humor that preserved it from all taint of sentimentality. In *Ritus dei* is he thinking of himself?

Methinks in him there dwells alway
A sea of laughter very deep.

And if He laughs at fools, why should He not?
but God doth dwell
Behind the feigned gladness,
Inhabiting a sacred core of sadness.

In these passages he himself gives us the expression of the two moods. He would say, "I am certain God made fools for us to enjoy, but there must be an economy of joy in the presence of a fool."

A profound sympathy, which carried him always to the root of the matter, was the principal source of his strength as a poet. He knew how to pierce beneath the surface and to get at the true value of things. When he is in Rome he does not seek to illustrate the city's grandeur in resounding lines. He writes, instead, his "Roman Women," in which he contrasts the simple Italian woman with a type of English conventionalism seen on the Pincio. He is not unjust to the latter. He does not attack her with specious satire. But he sees clearly wherein the Roman woman has the advantage, how much more of a woman she is in her motherhood, her simplicity, her utter naturalness. It is the natural figure that always moves him, and helps him to write as sterling a poem as "The Peel Life-Boat," too long, unfortunately, to be quoted here. Equally well illustrative, however, of his wholesome tenderness, is this shorter composition:

THE INTERCEPTED SALUTE.
A little maiden met me in the lane,
And smiled a smile so very fair,
So full of trust and happiness,
I could not choose but bless
The child, that she should have such grace
To laugh into my face.

She never could have known me; but I thought
It was the common joy that wrought
Within the little creature's heart,
As who should say: "Thou art
As I, the heaven is bright about us;
And there is God to love us.
And I am but a little gleeful maid,

And thou art big, and old, and staid;
But the blue hills have made thee mild
As is a little child.
Wherefore I laugh that thou may'st see—
O, laugh! O! laugh with me!"

A pretty challenge! Then I turned me round,
And straight the sober truth I found.
For I was not alone; behind me stood,
Beneath his load of wood,
He that of right the smile possessed—
Her father manifest.

O, blest be God! that such an overplus
Of joy is given to us:
That that sweet innocent
Gave me the gift she never meant,
A gift secure and permanent!
For, howsoever the smile had birth,
It is an added glory on the earth.

This is Brown in his most characteristic mood, brimming over with the milk of human kindness. He has his bookish moods, too, as witness these three brief pieces:

A WISH.
Of two things one; with Chaucer let me ride,
And hear the Pilgrims' tales; or, that denied,
Let me with Petrarch in a dew-sprout grove
Ring endless changes on the bells of love.

DANTE AND ARIOSTO.
If Dante breathes on me his awful breath,
I rise and go; but I am sad as death—
I go, but, turning, who is that I see?
I whisper: "Ariosto, wait for me!"

Literature and music both moved him, but it

nothing that he wrote is commonplace, dull or lifeless. His heart was in his work, his love of truth and beauty and all things right and fine amounted to a passion, and he struck a note of purity and sweetness that promises to last.

ENCHANTED GARDENS.

Another Book on the English Country House.

GARDENS OLD AND NEW. The Country House and Its Garden Environments. Edited by H. Avray Tipping, M. A. Illustrated from photographs by Charles Latham. Vol. III. Folio, pp. xi, 346. Imported by Charles Scribner's Sons.

The series in which this volume appears makes just the right appeal to the lover of beautiful gardens. Good talk about those gardens is always welcome, but the main thing is to have pictures of them, such pictures as a skilled photographer can make. Water color, in the right hands, is no doubt a good medium for the

LITERARY NOTES.

Mr. Brooks Adams has for two or three years been working on a biography of his grandfather, John Quincy Adams. Documents in the possession of his own family have enabled him to embody much new material in his book. It will be published by G. W. Jacobs & Co. in their series of "American Crisis Biographies."

In reviewing very cordially last Sunday "The Gourmet's Guide to Europe," the little book in which Lieutenant Colonel Newham-Davis has handled an interesting theme with the touch of an artist, we expressed the hope that there would be an American edition of it. This has since come to hand, bearing Brentano's imprint. We congratulate these publishers. As we have already stated, the book is as useful as it is absorbing.

The Paris correspondent of "The Athenæum" states that M. Maeterlinck is working at his home in Normandy on his new drama, "Marie-Magdeleine." The writer adds that "in spite of what this title seems to hint, the subject matter of the play is not mystical, and the new work has nothing to do with dramas of dream and legend; it is rather in the style of 'Monna Vanna,' which marks an evolution of Maeterlinck's talent toward reality and drama meant



THE EAST PERGOLA AT EASTON LODGE IN ESSEX.
(From a photograph.)

was chiefly in the joys and sorrows of men and women that he found his material. When the purely human theme was not uppermost in his mind he would give himself to the beauty of nature, and sing just for the joy of singing. He begins one of his poems with a reference to his ambition:

To sing a song shall please my countrymen;
To unlock the treasures of the Island heart;
With loving feet to trace each hill and glen,
And find the ore that is not for the mart
Of commerce: this is all I ask.
No task,
But joy, God wot!

Singing was unquestionably a joy to him. You feel it over and over again in such lyrics as "Vespers," "Veris et Favoni," "Apple Tree," "My Garden," and a dozen others that it would be a pleasure to quote. Does he communicate joy to his reader? Yes, in his way. Nothing that he wrote sweeps you off your feet and takes you captive as, with the great poets, a single line will often take you captive. But



T. E. BROWN.
(From a photograph.)

illustration of sunny, flower filled spaces, but the right hands are rare, and in any case the camera gives us a more vivid sense of the subject. It is especially useful in the preparation of a book like this, in which architecture is no less important than are the triumphs of the gardener. Indeed, a great part of the beauty of these wonderful gardens is due to the mansions they surround. In some cases the house is so interesting that it holds, so to say, the centre of the stage.

One of Mr. Tipping's notable chapters treats of Laver Marney Towers, in Essex, the seat of a family dating from the time of Henry II. The brick facade of the southern side of this remarkable building embraces two spacious bays, which rise to a height of eight stories. The numerous windows hint vaguely of Gothic design, but in their general aspect the impressive towers of brick recall the architecture of the North Italian Renaissance. There is much in the book which, as in this instance, is significant for the student of the art of building. The selection ranges from the imposing pile of Castle Howard, with its Italian dome, to modest manor houses whose simple gables stand for one of the most beguiling phases of Tudor taste. In treating of the first and second volumes in this series we have paid ample attention to the fine character of Mr. Latham's photographs, and the equally good quality of Mr. Tipping's historical notes. We need only to observe now that the third volume maintains the standard of its predecessors. It celebrates some thirty or forty places of enchantment, bringing their glamour to our very doors.

The Funk & Wagnalls Company has published the first volume of "The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge." This is based on the third edition of the "Realencyklopadie" of J. J. Herzog. It has been prepared under the supervision of Dr. S. M. Jackson, with the assistance of eight or ten experienced editors. It embraces Biblical, historical, doctrinal and practical theology, and Biblical, theological and ecclesiastical biography from the earliest times to the present day. There are to be twelve volumes in all. The first, which carries the record to "Basilians," the monks or nuns following the rule of St. Basil, who introduced the cenobitic life into Asia Minor, runs to five hundred pages, but we note that a paper of fair lightness has been used, so that the well proportioned octavo is easy to handle.

for the stage." This play is to be acted next winter.

Mr. Swinburne, it is reported, is engaged upon the revision of his book on "The Age of Shakespeare." This means, we suppose, that he is engaged in the congenial task of piling Pelion upon Ossa.

A new book by Major Martin Hume is always a pleasure, and we are glad to hear that he has another one in press. Under the title of "Two English Queens and a Spanish King," it will form a history of the relations between Philip II and Mary and Elizabeth. It will contain some new information, drawn, as is usual with this author, from manuscripts laboriously hunted down. The book will appear in the fall.

The medallion of the late Mrs. Cragie, which we reproduced in this place last Sunday, was unveiled in the general library of University College, London, on Wednesday, July 1. Lord Curzon was the principal speaker. On this occasion the memorial committee handed over to the treasurer of the college a sum of money for the foundation of a John Oliver Hobbes scholarship in modern English literature.

The July number of "The International Studio" opens with an illustrated article on the recent exhibition of the National Sculpture Society at Baltimore. There are also papers on the exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, the work of the Ten American Painters and recent accessions of modern art in the Wiltach collection at Philadelphia. Other subjects treated are the Royal Academy, the New Gallery, the Salon and the etchings of Sir Charles Holroyd. All these articles are, of course, fully illustrated.

Still another Ibsen manuscript has been brought to light, a romantic tale called "Song at Akershus," Akershus being the name of a fortress in Christiania. The story dates from the playwright's early years. It is said, by the way, that there has been talk of turning his house into an Ibsen museum, but that his widow is disinclined to have the project carried out just now.

The Putnams have recently published "Memories of Eight Parliaments," a book by Mr. Henry W. Lucy, the Parliamentary commentator of "Punch," whose pen has often been employed in our own columns. The book is divided into two parts, one treating of men and the other of manners. The author has known five Prime Ministers, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Disraeli, Lord Salisbury, Lord Rosebery and Mr. Balfour. He has lately completed a volume of private reminiscences, which will appear in the autumn under the title of "Sixty Years in the Wilderness: Some Passages by the Way."