

The Inverted Torch. By Edith M. Thomas. Boston and New York. Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1890. 16mo. pp. ix. 94. \$1.00.

There is what may justly be called the finest literary quality in Miss Thomas's poetry. But its strong marks of study and cultivation often rob it of freedom and prevent the spontaneous sympathetic response which characterize less studied and more fresh and thrilling verse. In reading her classic lines we are often less impressed by what their sentiment suggests than we are by the conviction that she is a careful and painstaking student of the English masters whose methods of phrasing and turns of thought she has so faithfully comprehended and expressed. Sometimes she is led into Browning's obscure method and it is not easy to detect her meaning. But in spite of all, her originality often asserts itself, and then no poetry is more tender and charming than hers as it sings to the responsive soul. "The Inverted Torch" is an "In Memoriam," which, although not to be compared with Tennyson's in simplicity and directness, has many beauties in its interpretation of the deep spiritual aspects of life, and is ever fragrant with the aroma of faith and hope. She

tells of a dead mother, those "Dearest lips that Time hath stilled;" and we know not where to look for a more perfect and beautiful expression of the condition of the motherless than is contained in the following lines:

"In little years, from dreams of evil guise
That trouble childhood's sleep, I oft would wake
Calling on one dear name whose might could break
The charm that heavy lay upon my eyes.
Then, quickly won by thy soft-breathed replies,
Came Peace, as stilly as the falling flake,
And Sleep within his blissful arms would take
And bear me to the kiss of morning skies.
Still, still, awaking from some pained dream,
I call thy name—but with what other cheer!
Now beats my heart beneath this touch extreme
As slow with grief as once how fast with fear!
Yet oft it seems (ah, might it more than seem!)
Thou and thy shielding comfort still are near."

And these well go with the others:

"When I before thee hoped to lay
Some fruitage of the slow responsive year,
Thou, tarrying not, art gone the Lonely way."

The closing lines of the poem are the cheerful song of consolation:

"Thou Kindler of the spark of life divine,
Be henceforth the Inverted Torch a sign
That, though the flame beloved thou dost depress.
Thou wilt not speed it into nothingness;
But out of nether gloom wilt reinspire,
And homeward lift the keen empyreal fire!"