

like Teukros behind the shield of Aias, seek the shelter of the ægis of universal genius that they may shoot their petty arrows forth without molestation. They invite criticism but they insist that it shall be in the form of praise, and they are hurt if their demands for literary *backshish* are not complied with. This traditional exemption of the rhyming class has no counterpart in any other field of human activity. If a man writes a poor play or novel, or paints an execrable picture, or fails as an actor, or attempts to sing in public although devoid of vocal powers, he is not surprised to hear the facts set forth without circumlocution. But if one thrusts upon the public a volume of mediocre or trashy verses and a critic in the fulfillment of duty speaks of them as they really are, then the critic is "brutal," the "poet" is "scorned," and for this blasphemy against Parnassus there is no forgiveness! And yet the difference between bad verse and good verse is as the difference between a vile chromo and a beautiful painting—every judge of art can distinguish between them at a glance, and there is no more possibility of mistake than there is that an epicure shall fail to detect the distinction between a barn-yard fowl and canvas back duck. But the cook insists that the barn-yard fowl is duck, and is hurt if any one suggests that it is not as good as canvas back! Still, however much he may sympathize with the sensitive nature of the cook, we know that the epicure will continue to declare that all ducks are not of the canvas back species. A great deal of "brutal" criticism would be saved if authors would be content to offer their productions for what they really are. If many volumes of so-called "poetry," for instance, were classed with household "embroidery" or painting "plaques," or making "crazy quilts," or whatever else occupies the feminine or effeminate mind in moments of leisure, how much better it would be for the mutual relations of author and critic. It is not the thing itself, but the solemn pretense that it is worth the attention of any reasonable being, which arouses critical "brutality." Let the inditer of rhymes, who knows in his inner consciousness that he is not and never can be a poet, declare in a prefatory note: "This is a collection of metrical nonsense; I don't know why I wrote it; it has no meaning; please pass it by"—and the critic shall roar as gently as any sucking dove; his only comment shall be a murmured assent; and for that "poet," at least, brutal scorn shall not be his portion!

## RECENT POETRY.

### Forewords.

THE tradition that any one who takes upon himself or herself the sacred name of "poet" must not under any circumstances be "scorned," is one of the interesting survivals from the middle ages, when a poet was really a poet and had something to say and was properly honored. Now, the laurel wreath, self-assumed by many, has become the badge of intellectual mendicancy. "Please do not scorn me; I am a poet," is the stereotyped introduction to many a volume of verse whose authors,