

THE EDITOR RECOMMENDS—

Miss Lowell

PERHAPS Amy Lowell never cares to repeat a performance; yet a second volume of "Legends" (Houghton Mifflin) seems inevitable. These eleven dramatic tales are so brilliantly successful that we can only hope for more of their kind. Here is a canvas broad enough for the strokes of that untiring brush! Now she paints with the fine lines of a worker on Chinese porcelains:

Chasing crimson butterflies with faint silk fans,
On the slim teapots of young bamboo.

Now she dips into the macabre palette of a William Blake as

The skeleton mounts like a great grey ape,
and its bones rattle; the rattle of the bones is
the crack of dead trees bitten by frost. The
wind is desolate and the sea moans.

Or paints as vivid a picture of a storm coming down across New England as has ever been produced—more than painting, more than description. You can feel the taut air, see the clouds, hear the storm:

The sky is lowering and black, a strange blue-blackness, which makes red houses pink, and green leaves purple. Over the flowing purple trees, the sky is an iron-blue, split with forks of straw-yellow. The thunder breaks out of the sky with a crash, and rumbles away in a long, hoarse drag of sound. The river is the blue of Concord grapes, with steel points and oblongs, down the bridge; up stream, it is pale and even, a solid line of unpolished zinc.

This ability of Miss Lowell's to create a variety of emotions simultaneously seems to me never to have been so apparent as in this volume. Perhaps it is because she has discovered in these folk stories a medium peculiarly grateful; but I'm inclined to think it simply a growing mastery of rhythm and color, along with un-

flagging vitality and an extraordinary faculty for the choice of the individual word for its sound value. But these are not only poems of sense appeal. They are finely cerebrated. Nine of them are so vividly dramatic that the effect on my mind is as clear-cut and as memorable as if they were etched there. "Memorandum Confided by a Yucca to a Passion Vine" and "A Legend of Porcelain", while they are filled with emotion, color, and rich sound, do not, for me, produce the same feeling of satisfaction as do the others. "Many Swans" has the cosmic terror, the delicate humor, the great loneliness, and the exquisite symbolism of the American Indian, mixed with a human understanding that makes this legend distinctly Miss Lowell's. In poetry, I can think of no one who has so well interpreted the myths of the Indians. Chief Blackbird's funeral song is not a thing to be read. It forces itself into sound, and should be shouted from a hillside, out across a valley toward sunset. "Before the Storm", besides being a powerful descriptive poem, is one of the best ghost stories I have ever read.

Both in subject-matter and in technique Miss Lowell has surpassed herself in these legends; for she ranges from the tender to the passionate, from the dainty to the horrible, in rhythms to suit her needs—now the swinging ballad, now polyphonic prose. She proves herself again, not only the poet of rich fancy, stinging imagery, kaleidoscopic color, and astoundingly beautiful rhythms; but the successful raconteur—a good New Englander, an accomplished spinner of yarns.