

Those readers of the British poets who have even the conventional estimate of Thomas Moore, will not easily see on what principle of natural selection he has been excluded from a place in Messrs. Harper & Brothers' "English Men of Letters" series; and Mr. Symington's sketch of Moore's Life and Works, just issued in a small volume by that firm, is in the main so respectable a piece of literary work as to render more conspicuous its separation from the series to which the subject manifestly belongs. Not improbably, however, the explanation is to be sought of the editor rather than of the publishers of the volume. A Fadladeen-like remark credited to Professor Morley concerning "Lalla Rookh," that "beside poems that rank with the powers of Nature, it looks like an oriental sugar-candy temple of confectioners' work," may doubtless be taken as a hint in the direction of the search. To the lovers of Moore, it must be a comfort to note the resemblance between the Professor's rhetoric and some of the "gorgeous sentences" which, as we are informed in the poem in question, "Fadladeen kept by him for rare and important occasions," and in which that great oriental critic has anticipated the judgment of the British Professor. "'And this,' said the Great Chamberlain, 'is poetry! this flimsy manufacture of the brain, which, in comparison with the lofty and durable monuments of genius, is as the gold filigree-work of Zamara beside the eternal architecture of Egypt.'" It is curious to add to the stricture quoted from Professor Morley, the saying of Hazlitt concerning the fidelity and aptness of Moore's descriptions of oriental life and scenery, that to read them "was as good as riding on the back of a camel." As to his pre-eminence as a lyric poet, there is of course little disagreement. Rogers has said that Moore was born "with a rose in his lips and a nightingale singing on the top of the bed." Shelley avowed himself "proud to acknowledge his inferiority" to Moore as a song-writer; and even the author of the "Hebrew Melodies" recognized in him "a peculiarity of talent or rather talents—poetry, music, voice—all his own, and an expression in each which never was and never will be possessed by another," declaring that his lyrics were worth all the epics that ever were composed. Mr. Symington's little volume aims to present "a true picture of the poet Moore—the man, his life, and works." The life of the poet was, like his character, singularly even and placid, and but little space is needed to tell its story. Except the American journey of 1803-4, and some subsequent travels upon the continent, there is little that is eventful in his personal history. He began his literary career when but twenty-one years old, and though living to the age of seventy-two and writing occasionally all his life,

his fame rests almost wholly upon the productions of his youth. He received for his writings the sum of £30,000 (£3,000 being paid him for the manuscript of "Lalla Rookh" alone), and yet he was a spendthrift to the end of his days, and left nothing to his wife but his MS. Diary. After the poet's death, this diary was published (1852-6), under the editorial supervision of Lord John Russell, in eight volumes; and from them many entertaining and characteristic extracts are made by Mr. Symington. His own estimates of the value of Moore's work are moderate and judicious, and are generously illustrated by choice selections from the songs and poems under discussion. American poetry is complimented in the volume by the reprinting of Mr. R. H. Stoddard's fine verses on Moore, originally published in "Scribner's Monthly," and of Dr. Holmes's spirited and melodious tribute—a lyric whose music is as exquisite and haunting as that of the Irish melodist himself—read at the centenary celebration in Boston. The portrait at the beginning of the volume shows a jovial and Cupid-like face, whose owner we might well imagine capable of almost any "rogueries," even of those so freely imputed to "Tommy" by the researches of Father Prout. With so many riches, Mr. Symington may well expect from all lovers of Moore a hearty welcome for his compact and unpretentious little volume. It is to be regretted that so neat a book should have its agreeableness lessened, in a minor way, by bad punctuation, which is at times quite irritating. Publishers who are in quest of models of styles in punctuation to adopt and to avoid, cannot do better than select Mr. Sidney Lanier's "Science of English Verse" as an example and a pattern, and Mr. Symington's *Life of Thomas Moore* as an example and a warning.

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