A Company of Recent Poets

1. Impressions. By Lilla Cabot Perry. Copeland & Day. 2. From Dusk to Dusk. By Cale Young Rice, Nashville, Tenn. 3. The Song of the Wave. By George Cabot Lodge. Charles Scribner's Sons. 4. The Wayfarers. By Josephine Peabody. Copeland & Day. 5. Poems. By P. H. Savage. Copeland & Day. 6. Labor and the Angel. By D. C. Scott. Copeland & Day. 7. The Christ. By O. C. Auringer and J. Oliver Smith. G. P. Putnam's Sons. 8. Songs of Good Fighting. By E. R. White. Lamson, Wolffe & Co.

THANKFUL may he be,—the reviewer of the New Year's output of verse,—if at the beginning of his labors his hands and heart are lightened by this little volume of "Impressions" (1). Nothing could be sweeter, sounder, or more informed throughout with the true lyrical spirit, than this charming singer's sequence of verses, "A Love Story," in which the varying moods of feminine mobility in the great episode of a woman's life are set forth. The ingenious titles of the pieces are themselves half-poems, and naïvely trace the progress of the tender passion. Moreover, as regards metrical form and verbal phrase, which are here always characterized by regularity and clarity, Miss Perry betrays no imitative tendency: she is just herself, and that self finds most fitting representation in the perfect little lyric entitled "No Letter from Him," which we give entire:

> "Hast half forgot me? Once I was thy mind.
> Dost but half love me? Once I was thy heart.
> What once thou gav'st me left no more behind.
> I give all back, nor care to keep a part.
> Where once I reigned, I leave an empty throne,
> But fill it worthily, I ask alone."

"From Dusk to Dusk" (2) was probably not intended to indicate the "shadiness" of certain selections to be found under this titular device, but the words do indicate the remedy best employed in the case of such poems as "The Minister's Wife" and "Of the Flesh." And yet we will so far contradict our own recommendation as to quote the opening lines of the latter poem:

> "We met upon the street,
> Quick passion flirted from the eye of each,
> No dilettante heat."

The volume is dedicated to the author's father and mother, and is published by The Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House. We would recommend that the synod hereafter thoroughly examine, previously to publishing, the works of this young author, and that parental restraint be exercised as well.

There is scholarship, there is evident acquaintance with the best in poetry, there is even good mastery of poetic form and movement, in the contents of this volume (3). The poet, too, has honestly felt how the

Muse has been crippled by the clipping of the wings of Romance in our modern days. He grieves thereat with a wellnigh hopeless grief, dedicates his jeremiads to Leopardi, frequently quotes the Italian poet, and also invokes Schopenhauer. And yet Mr. Lodge so far shakes off his chilliness as to give us a stirring song in praise of "The Norsemen"; while "Serenade" attests that lyric tenderness is not impossible to this disciple of Leopardi.

"The Wayfarers" (4) of Miss Peabody and their elusive quest are foreshadowed by a stanza from the *Vita Nuova* which she significantly places on the title-page. How shall the wayfarers express what they have seen, how shall the singer embody the vision she has had and make it apparent to all eyes? This note of mystical and half-disappointed, yet ever-renewed, quest is repeated again and again. As upon the song of Mrs. Piatt, a seldom lifting shadow lies athwart the woof and warp of this younger poet's weft of verse. Yet has she gifts to make her glad. She has had fleeting glimpses of "The Dryads," and she has found herself in happier moods "Befriended":

> "The winds come by from east and west,
> With pleasant passing words,
> I warm my hands in sunset,
> And share my bread with birds."

Something of the gratuitous dogmatism and crotchety sententiousness of the late Emily Dickinson we find in Mr. Savage's (5) annunciatory quatrain:

> "Spinoza polished glasses clear,
> To view the heavenly hemisphere,
> I verses, that my friend therethrough,
> My arc of earth may rightly view."

This orphic tone we recognize, and call it "New England." But here and there through this little volume are many living pictures of New England: fields, woods, and stream sides. Some are so good, and so evidently bespeak the author's genuine love for nature (as in "The Maple Tree" and "New England"), that we can scarce forgive him the couplet:

> "No forward aspen-leaf or oak
> Has through his leathern jacket broke."

Another lover of nature we also have here in the author of "Labor and the Angel" (6), who at times treats the divinity with an almost jocular familiarity. We have, for instance, on his very first page an excellent description of the fitful autumn sunlight, which

> "Touching with patches of gold
> The knolls and the hollows,
> Crosses the lane,
> And slips into the wood;
> Then flashes a mile away on the farm,"

but we also have in the same breath

> "Cheek by jowl, arm in arm,
> The shadow 's afoot with the shine."

We are sorry to say, moreover, that we do not understand the convolutions of meaning Mr. Scott has put into his poem of "Angelus"; especially vague are we as regards the "married drones and overtones," which he fancies spread into shapes that shine

> "With the aura of the metals"

composing the bells. And alas! the refrain he employs profanely reminds us of that in a negro melody, "And he hit him in the eyeball —*him!*"

Appealing to a limited parish—we use the word advisedly—is the volume, of joint authorship, entitled "The Christ" (7). The work of N. P. Willis in the same field has become a classic, albeit the "stretched metre" of the ancient biblical tale. It is a question whether aught in the present volume deserves to be placed alongside of the poet just mentioned; for a certain sophistry has entered into the enlarged text, —a sophistry Browningesque in flavor, and perhaps in its origin to be traced back to such poems as "An Epistle" and "Cleon." However, in the narrative (purporting to be that of a wandering Arab), which describes the signs and wonders witnessed during the forty days of "The Temptation," there is considerable imagination; also some vigorous lines are to be found in the very fair blank verse employed. Less ambitious but very sweetly expressed are the ideas in the brief poems, "Lily of the Valley" and "Lesson of the Sparrow."

We are convinced that a worse master to follow there cannot be than the at present universal charmer, Rudyard Kipling! He is followed—at a long range—by the author of "Songs of Good Fighting" (8). In the "Song of Sankin's Men" and "Of the Lost Ship" we perceive a glimmer of sanity, whereupon we might almost predict better things yet to be from this swashbuckler on the high seas of verse. But we give up in despair when we hear "The Buccaneer's Toast." And as to the astonishing performance which closes the book, wherein the Sea is represented addressing the entire Western Continent as "Ye wastrel spann of land," and wherein the Great Lakes trippingly describe themselves as now "chaunting runes of wrath," as now "lissome with limpidity,"—we have no words to express our admiration of the novel and versatile prosopopœia at the author's command.