

## Recent Verse

1. *From Dreamland Sent.* By Lilian Whiting. Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 2. *Henry Timrod's Poems.* Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

THE first poem in this volume (1) of verse strikes the keynote of the entire contents:

"Through days and dreams I seem to walk with one  
Whose feet must shun,  
Henceforth, the paths of earth; for whom the sun  
Rises in unknown realms I cannot trace;  
And still there is to me no vacant place . . .  
A tender hand is clasped within my own,  
And on the air there vibrates still her tone."

As suggested in the title of this poem, "Companioned," the writer everywhere and at all times has assurance, satisfactory to her own heart, that the presence and influence of the vanished friend have never been withdrawn. Especially are these comforting monitions of the invisible companionship vouchsafed on the returns of religious holidays, as at Christmas and Eastertide, when the faith of the believer is quickened anew, and all tenderest memories are reconsecrated. It is to the communicant of evangelical faith, indeed, and perhaps to such alone, that these strains of sorrow and bereavement, modified by a sense of the spirit's unfailing nearness, will make appeal. A reader thus prepared will, no doubt, find sympathetic ministration in the nepenthes offered by Miss Whiting's gentle and compassionating Muse. The chastening mission of grief and loss is never lost sight of; and the writer seems ever to bear in mind the force of her own conviction in the lines:

"I wait—but I dream no ecstatic morrow,  
Of time enchanted by music and flowers;  
I know that the highest is won through sorrow,  
And I know that duty must burden the hours."

While mainly elegiac in character, this volume contains some selections of a lighter lyrical order; some, also, treating of "occasions," where, however enthusiastic the motive, the result impresses us with a sense of perfunctoriness. Exercising, usually, a discriminating taste as regards the musical value of words and the requisitions of verse-weaving, Miss Whiting occasionally prepares a disappointing surprise for her readers, as when deliberately rhyming "home" with "Leone" in the little poem which employs this Poe-esque name as title. Miss Whiting is seen at her best in such lyrics as "A Summer Memory" and "Tell Me So," in each of which musical movement and pictorial feeling sway the verse.

We are told in the Introduction accompanying the present Memorial Edition of the poems of Henry Timrod (2) that the poet was a "child of nature," and that "his song is the voice of the South-land." The Introduction furnishes, also, sundry characterizations, in a somewhat florid vein, of the poet's work. We are advised that the "dainty voluptuousness in 'A Serenade' kindles with the luxuriousness of the South," while another poem is described as being "warm with the breath of rapturous feeling and rich with the fragrance of flowers."

Yet were we ungrateful did we fail to acknowledge our indebtedness to the loving and painstaking hand that has here provided so complete a bibliography of the verse written by the gifted Carolinian, as well as so careful a biography of the poet; since we much doubt if even the verse-writers of the present generation (to say nothing of the verse-readers) do not need to be informed in the directions aimed at by this prefatory note. For instance, many will learn with surprise that the first small volume of Timrod's poems was published in Boston and had its heartiest "send-off" from the New York *Tribune*. Thoughtful readers, moreover, will derive suggestion from the fact, here recorded, that an ancestor of the poet was alike president of the German Friendly Society of Charleston, and a foremost name on the roll of the German Fusiliers of Charleston, an organization formed when the shot was fired that was heard around the world! If there is aught in ancestral ruling, and if the claims of heredity are valid, then are we well able to deduce whence came the mingled qualities of gentleness and of courage, of quiet contemplation, of lively human sympathy, and of fearless independence in thought, which meet us in the work (alas, that it was all the *early* work!) of Henry Timrod. To any tentative artificer of verse we could find it in our heart to commend, without qualification, the exquisitely conscientious mechanism of the melodious and dainty love-poem entitled "Katie"—a composition whose naïve tenderness can make us forget that art has aught to do with its being, until we are more than willing to share the poet's sweet illusion while in the presence of the chosen maid from over seas:

" I roam with her through fields of cane,  
And seem to stroll an English lane,  
Which, white with blossoms of the May,  
Spreads its green carpet in her way . . .  
All birds that love the English sky  
Throng round my path when she is by."

The feeling for nature is clearly indicated in many of these poems, whether in such description as the following lines contain,

" Whilst the high pines in one another's arms  
Sleep, you may sometimes with unstartled ear  
Catch the far fall of voices, how remote  
You know not, and you do not care to know";

or in the loving tribute to "Flower-Life," when, having crushed some lowly blossom, the dreamer is haunted by its ghost,—

" And little angel-flowers with wings  
Would haunt me through the night."

Readers there will be, to whom Timrod's war-time poems must ever make a strong appeal. Among such productions, "A Cry to Arms" seems to us the most distinctive in thought, and the most sonorous as regards rhythmic flow. We can but feel that some portion of the poet's heart is unlocked for us by the sonnet's key; and of the essays in this crucial form of composition (fifteen sonnets are given), perhaps the very first in order is the one which most clearly reveals to us how single was the purpose, how unworldly the aspiration, that animated the soul of Henry Timrod.

" Poet, if on a lasting fame be bent  
Thy unperturbing hopes, thou wilt not roam  
Too far from thine own happy heart and home;  
Cling to the lowly earth, and be content!  
So shall thy name be dear to many a heart;

So shall the noblest truths by thee be taught ;  
The flower and fruit of wholesome human thought  
Bless the sweet labors of thy gentle art.  
The brightest stars are nearest to the earth,  
And we may track the mighty sun above  
Even by the shadow of a slender flower.  
Always, O bard, humility is power!  
And thou may'st draw from matters of the hearth  
Truths wide as nations, and as deep as love."

It should be noted, in conclusion, that the present edition of these poems is contributory to the erection of a memorial to their author.

---

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.