

POEMS BY EDWIN ARNOLD.

LOTUS AND JEWEL. Containing "In an Indian Temple," "A Casket of Gems," "A Queen's Revenge," with Other Poems. By EDWIN ARNOLD, C.S.I., Author of the "Light of Asia," "Pearls of the Faith," "In an Indian Temple," "The Song Celestial," "The Secret of Death," etc. Boston : Roberts Brothers.

This new volume of poems by Edwin Arnold deals for the most part with those Oriental themes—partly in translation, if that can be called translation which seems rather paraphrase—which he has made familiar to Western readers in such glowing imagery and liquid verse. There are a few poems of occasion mostly inspired by the more familiar scenes of Western civilization ; a few translations from Victor Hugo ; a few poems on classical themes. But in none of these does the heart of Mr. Arnold seem thoroughly at home. It is only when his spirit throbs with the fervid life of the faraway Orient that he sweeps the chords of his harp with a bold, free hand. His intellectual life seems to be saturated with the strange, subtle soul of India, whose sweetness and strength he has drunk to the dregs in that splendid literature whose poetry and philosophy are commingled with a passionate sensuousness.

The long poem which opens the collection is entitled, "In an Indian Temple," which name is also given to the book. The *Sahib*, or foreigner, whom we may suppose to have been embodied in the poet himself, discourses with a Brahman priest in the cool depths of an Indian fane. There the two discuss the deep questions of Indian philosophy and religion, and the holy man tells his infidel friend the strange mysteries and the deep problems which lie under the symbolism of his faith. A beautiful Nautch girl, one of the favored attendants of the temple, sings her gay or solemn songs while the elders converse. The spirit of the scene is rich and deep in Orientalism. The Sahib puts some very hard questions to the Pundit of the Eastern and Western civilizations, and, as in duty bound, Mr. Arnold does not let the Hindu philosopher come off quite victorious in the war of wits. In the "Casket of Gems" our poet paints glowing and splendid

fancies of the birth and significance of the various jewels, the opal, diamond, the ruby, the pearl, the amethyst, jade, the topaz, amber, emeralds, and draws from the history and condition of the Western as well as the Eastern world. Myth and tradition are woven with the quaintest philosophy in these gorgeous verses, which themselves are jewelled in their carved beauty.

The other long poem is from the Virâtâ Parva of the "Mahâbhâta," the great Hindu epic. We are led to suppose from Mr. Arnold's note that it is a genuine translation. The narrative of "A Queen's Revenge" is very spirited, and casts light on ancient Indian life and manners. Five Pundu princes have quitted the forest in which they have spent twelve years of exile with their Queen-Consort, Dranpadi, to dwell in disguise at the court of King Virâtâ, of the Matsyas. The beautiful queen is disguised as a harem attendant, and is insulted by the adulterous love of the brother of Virâtâ's queen. The poem recites the fierce vengeance which she takes through the strong arm of one of her disguised guardians. Of the minor poems, many of which are strikingly good, the best to our mind is entitled, "A Rajput Nurse." It is a passionate and pathetic legend, narrated with a splendid *verve* and swing, which irresistibly makes the heart throb and the eyes fill with tears. A Rajput nurse, the foster-mother of the young prince, whom she suckles at the same time with her own babe, hears the steps of the assassins on the palace stair as they come to slay the young heir. She changes the princely insignia to her own babe, and gives him up to the dagger, while she escapes with her royal charge. The stranger who hears the thrilling story asks the bard :

"But they gave her much gold and beautiful things,  
And garments, and land for her people, and a home in  
the palace! May be  
She had grown to love that princeling even more than  
the child on her knee."

"May it please the Presence, quoth Vittoo, it seemeth  
not so! They gave  
The gold, and the garments, and jewels, as much as the  
proudest would have;  
But the same night deep in her true heart, she buried a  
knife and smiled,  
Saying this: 'I have saved my Rana! I must go to  
suckle my child.'"