

temporary of the author from whose poetical work could be selected one of like size that should be its equal in certain brilliant and exquisite qualities. And yet these lyrics and sonnets are from no wider field than that furnished by the two medium-sized volumes, *Cloth of Gold* and *Flower and Thorn*. Each poem is, in truth, a gem, exquisitely finished; and, withal, how charming its setting! A certain easy completeness and perfection of artistic treatment are the conspicuous traits. The reader feels with each poem that not a minute shade has been missed, not a hair-stroke is awry. Mr. Aldrich is a writer of *vers de société*, using the phrase in its best sense; and as such has no rival nearer than Austin Dobson. But to say this is to deny him the highest place on Parnassus. It is not perfection of execution nor suggestions of charming situations and happy thoughts alone that are required. With all his consummate grace, brightness, and facility, he falls short of being a great poet. There are chords which this sweet musician never causes to vibrate. If he essays themes weighted with profound or tragic import, he seems to have donned a mask, or to have chosen a direction not spontaneous. Such, at least, remains the decided impression with regard to Mr. Aldrich's genius. The class of poems alluded to—very few in proportion—do not seem echoes from the depth of his soul; but gay, festive strains—these are the songs straight from the poet's heart. Every verse reflects his individuality and has the seal of genuineness. As a singularly suggestive contrast, is there to be found within the range of literature one so striking as that between Mr. Aldrich's poetical work and Mrs. Piatt's?—that Niobe among the muses who has transmuted her inconsolable bereavements into strains of exquisite art more touching, it seems to us, than are to be found elsewhere in the poetry of sorrow. It is not assumed, of course, that Mr. Aldrich has been personally exempt from the common lot of humanity; but, viewing him through the medium of his work, no more blithe-hearted nature has given wings of meter and rhyme to its joy of existence ("he has eyes of youth . . . he speaks holyday"); an atmosphere of golden light is his native element, and whatever is somber is foreign to his art. The world is full enough, indeed, of sadness; and one cannot be ungrateful to the poet who—though he stir only the lighter emotions—makes him forget its gloom and feel an hour of gay contentment, as if from a sip of the famous Amontillado Sherry which one of these lyrics celebrates (a song, by the way, whose airy swing is scarcely to be paralleled). Old Tomaso, the butler, might have hummed a song as gay and heedless under the trellises in praise of the wonderful "Sunshine" of the Monte Beni vintage. And, indeed, the idea suggests itself that "Amontillado" and all its boon companion-lyrics of this dainty volume are such as Donatello, had he been metrically inclined, might have indited in his happy youth in that ancestral castle among the Apennines before he became overwhelmed in the dark cloud that enshrouded Miriam.

XXXVI *Lyrics and XII Sonnets*. By T. B. Aldrich. [Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.00.] On laying down this choice volume, one may be led to ask himself whether there is, indeed, any con-