

or "The Unremitting Weariness" with "The Wife's Song", or "Counsel of Arrogance" with "God, I Am Broken", we shall find a greater wavering than that of lyrical feeling changing from mood to mood. Anna Wickham has found no philosophical trail as yet, and has made none. She is a brave and honest explorer who gives a faithful and passionate record of impressions in terse and vigorous poetry. It is good to hear her say:

God send a higher courage
For to cut straight and clean!

Like Anna Wickham, Jean Starr Untermeyer adds her word to the explanation of womanhood.

HERE ARE LADIES!

By Marguerite Wilkinson

HERE are poets! Seldom does a season bring more interesting collections of verse by women. Books that must be mentioned briefly deserve consideration at length.

"The Contemplative Quarry" by Anna Wickham, ably introduced by Louis Untermeyer, should be read slowly and thoughtfully. It is a veritable poetic thunderstorm. It shows the lightning of a swift, vivid, uncertain modern intellect zigzagging from wrath to love and from scorn to faith. Many books are interesting because they move in straight lines, or at a tangent, toward individual solutions of life's problems. This book is interesting chiefly because it does not. To acclaim love and to doubt it, to defy man, as a feminist, and then to offer him the specious homage of precedence, to inveigh against the church and then to pray reverently to the Mater Dolorosa in one and the same book,—surely this is to offer a series of unusual contrasts in thought and emotion.

If we compare "Out of the Womb of Mother Sin" with "Mater Dolorosa",

The lapping of lake water
Is like the weeping of women,
The fertile tears of women
That water the dreams of men.

The lyrics in "Dreams Out of Darkness" surpass those in Mrs. Untermeyer's first book, "Growing Pains". She has grown. The growth is made evident in the sincere subjectivity of her new work, in the intensity of the new moods, in the freedom and subtlety of the new organic rhythms which she uses.

Several of the poems fall below the level of the rest of the collection, but it is not of these that I shall speak. Rather let me praise the feminine pathos of "Little Dirge", the keen truth of "The Old Tune", the hardihood of "To a War Poet", the grave excellence of "Lullaby to a Man-Child", and the fine insight of "The Altar". Most of all I wish to pay tribute to "The Passionate Sword", the noblest poem in the book and one which I shall not soon forget. This book strikes deep and reaches high. It has strong roots and brave branches.

If Hazel Hall lacks the aggressive valor of Anna Wickham and the fervent bravery of Jean Starr Unter-

meyer, she has, instead, the profound courage of a cloister. "Curtains" is a rarely beautiful book. In it I find a character as firm as granite and, occasionally, the accent of genius.

What does she know of life and what has she to give? She knows a room with grey walls, the "watchful corners of a ceiling", a brown window-sill and as much of the sky as can be seen through the window, thread, needles, and the texture of the cloth that she makes into cuffs for bishops and dresses for babes. But she gives a luminous beauty wrought out of her intimacy with these inanimate things, a spiritual radiance that is the result of a perfect assimilation of limited experience.

"Counterpanes", "Things That Grow", and all the lyrics in the section called "Needlework" are thoroughly original. No woman ever wrote who could find more meanings in sewing. It must suffice to quote "The Long Day":

I am sewing out my sorrow,
Like a thread, wearing it thin;
It will be old and frayed to-morrow.
Needle, turn out; needle, turn in.

Sorrow's thread is a long thread.
Needle, one stitch; needle, two.
And sorrow's thread is a strong thread,
But I will wear it through.

Then not only will sorrow
Be old and thin and frayed;
But I shall have, to-morrow
Something sorrow has made.

There is fortitude to be found, also, in Florence Kilpatrick Mixter's fluent sonnets gathered together under the title, "Out of Mist". The finest, I think, is "Sanctuary". "St. Patrick's Cathedral" and "All Soul's Eve" are good lyrics and there is merit in "Invocation".

Jeannette Marks is at her best when she writes brief and simple lyrics in conventional metres. The long poems

in "Willow Pollen" are written in free verse that is colorful, inventive, and pleasantly fanciful, but "The Tide", "The Nest", "Two Candles", and "Wait Awhile" have more power over mind and heart. "Steps" is a miracle of condensation and "Repetends" is perfectly phrased. "Willow Pollen" is written without any affectation.

The same thing may be said of "The Lifted Cup" by Jessie B. Rittenhouse. The lyrics in this little grey volume are brief and scrupulously made. They have the precision of cameos. If we think that "The Dream", "Protest", and "One Star" have been too gently felt and written, we may say that they represent the low ebb of the book's excellence. We must admit that "Unsung", "The Wall", and "The Green Tree in Fall" are remarkable for clarity, grace, simplicity, and sincerity. At this high tide of its value the book reveals clean, fine feeling. Probably nothing in her first volume, "The Door of Dreams", was so good as the three short lyrics just mentioned.

Miss Rittenhouse's technique serves her purpose admirably. The short lines, the quick metres, the modest, inconspicuous rhyming are all appropriate to what she has to say. Her critical acumen makes it impossible for her to take out of the ink bottle those things which should be left in it. Sometimes she pleases us with a keen truth spoken casually, as in the last lines of "We Who Give Our Hearts in Spring":

We are caught into the flame
Where the golden fire runs,
All its ardor is the same
In the flesh or in the suns.

Here, in this book, are small fires, bright and warm, toward which those who value good taste may hold out their hands.

"Vigils", by Aline Kilmer, is well named. It tells the story of a wakeful

spirit keeping watch over the spiritual treasure life has given, sometimes proudly, but sometimes, as in the title poem, with the exquisite humility of arrogance broken down. It is a much finer book than "Candles That Burn", Mrs. Kilmer's first offering, in which she gave us the simple, pleasing, domestic songs of a likable young mother.

In "Vigils" we find a new dignity and austerity. We find a sensitive intellect throwing light upon the shadows of suffering. If the suffering is not beautiful, the chiaroscuro is. Sometimes Mrs. Kilmer can claim a kinship with Christina Rossetti.

Technically, too, Mrs. Kilmer has grown. The rhythms of these new lyrics, shaken as they are by the realities that they express, are more moving than the placid and even tunes of her earlier poems. Even the occasional flippancies in which she indulges help to keep the poems strong and cool, certain and keen. "Atone-ment", "The Gardens", "The Night Cometh", and "Shards" have an astonishing depth of tragic sincerity. Only thirty short lyrics are to be found in the book, but every one of them is worth reading. Mrs. Kilmer does not force us to pay in hours what we owe in minutes.

I might quote one of the tragic lyrics in full, but at this season it seems wiser to choose the last stanza of the gay and charming "Song Against Children".

The Contemplative Quarry and The Man with a Hammer. By Anna Wickham. Harcourt, Brace and Co.

Dreams Out of Darkness. By Jean Starr Untermyer. B. W. Huebsch.

Curtains. By Hazel Hall. John Lane Co.

Out of Mist. By Florence Kilpatrick Mixer. Boni and Liveright.

Willow Pollen. By Jeannette Marks. The Four Seas Co.

The Lifted Cup. By Jessie B. Rittenhouse. Houghton Mifflin Co.

Vigils. By Aline Kilmer. George H. Doran Company.

O the mistletoe bough, the mistletoe bough!
Could anyone touch it? I did not see how.
I hung it up high that it might last long,
I wreathed it with ribbons and hailed it with song.

But Christopher reached it, I do not know how,
And he ate all the berries off the mistletoe bough.

Truly, here are ladies, and poets!
May Apollo give them all becoming garlands!