

A MINOR POET'S VERSES.

(POEMS BY WILLIAM WATSON. MACMILLAN AND CO.)

VERY sweet, very skilful, frequently very thoughtful are the lyrics contained in Mr Watson's elegantly printed volume of 150 pages, yet, with one or two exceptions, there seems no necessity that they should ever have been written. In the work of the ordinary minor poet we do not look for this test of greatness, necessity, we are content to inhale the perfume of the flower as we pass and to make no inquiry concerning it. We accept it because it is there; it pleases us that it should be there, but we do not ask how it is there or why. But to the author of 'Wordsworth's Grave' it would seem on account of that one poem that we might fairly apply a higher standard of criticism. It is the indefeasible right of the critic to demand from any writer work as good as he has done, and it is in the ethics of criticism that he should demand it. Beautiful as these lyrics are, they lack both the strength and directness of that poem which could embody four true criticisms in as many lines. Not that Mr Watson's poetry was ever so remarkable for its robustness as for its delicate insight and exactness. He is a critic, it may be said, before he is an artist, and an artist before he is a poet, but he is a poet for all that, and, if not of the first, at any rate of the second order of magnitude. Listen to him at his best in this volume:

LIFE WITHOUT HEALTH.

Behold life builded as a goodly house And grown a mansion ruinous With winter blowing through its crumbling walls! The master paceth up and down his halls, And in the empty hours Can hear the tottering of his towers And tremor of their bases underground. And oft he starts and looks around At creaking of a distant door Or echo of his footfall on the floor. Thinking it may be one whom he awaits, And hark for many days awaited, Coming to lead him through the mouldering gates Out somewhere from his home despaired.

One of the most interesting poems of the collection is inscribed 'To Edward Dowden: on receiving from him a copy of the "Life of Shelley," the poet

whom at last the sea Gave to the fire, from whose wild arms the winds Took him, and shook him broadcast to the world.

In this Mr Watson traces his own descent from Shelley through Keats to Wordsworth. It is curious he makes no mention of Rossetti, who must be responsible for—

Onward the chariot of the Untarrying moves, Nor day divulges him nor night conceals; Thou hear'st the echo of unreturning hooves And thunder of irrevocable wheels.

And eager flutt'ring of life's ignorant wings, The smouldering infelicity of man

One counterpoising orient sultry kiss.

These verses are Rossetti undiluted, and they fall rather curiously from the lips of a singer who a year or two back was at the pains of pointing out to what extent that poet was over-rated. A good deal of the influence of Tennyson is also discernible, and indeed, even in his best work, it cannot be said that Mr Watson strikes a note which is purely and decisively his own. No doubt he owes much to the author of Michael, the purity and sameness of even his most trivial numbers bear witness to the fact, but he owes hardly less to Tennyson, who taught him the art of melody, and Rossetti, who lent him colour and bloom. Whether he will ever arrive at a note distinctly his own, is a question we should not like to answer either one way or the other on the evidence of the volume before us. Meanwhile, Mr Watson has given us a book full of the grace of finished workmanship, and which judged by any standard short of the highest cannot fail to arouse our unqualified admiration and pleasure.

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H. BRETT, Publisher, Auckland.

District Lands and Survey Office, Auckland, June 11, 1894.

IT is hereby notified that the under-mentioned TOWN and RURAL LANDS will be submitted for sale by public auction, at the Land Office, Auckland, on WEDNESDAY, the 11th day of July prox., at 11 o'clock a.m.

SCHEDULE.

- TOWN OF NGARUAWAHIA.—Section 140, 1r 7p, upset price £5 17s 6d. PARISH OF TIRIHANO.—Section 175, 4a 3r 7p, upset price £25 19s 6d; 171, 5a, £25; 170, 5a, £25; 175, 3a, £25. PARISH ANARIMU.—Section 15a, 10a, upset price £10. FIRST-CLASS LANDS—ROCKY COUNTY. PARISH ORUAWHARO.—Section M, 172, 103a, upset price £175 10s; 191a, 6a 2r, £115 17s 6d. N, pt. 172, broken to undulating forest land, containing 207 green and 39 dead kauri trees; Section 191a, about 8 acres fern and bush, remainder contains 53 green kauri trees and 198 totara trees. Both lots lie from 4 to 5 miles from Hakaru.

TERMS OF SALE.—One-fifth of the purchase money to be paid on the fall of the hammer, and the balance within 30 days thereafter.

GRICHARD MUELLER, Commissioner Crown Lands.

THE GREAT NORTHERN STEEPLECHASE.

(11TH JUNE, 1894.)

'Well, what's going to win the steeple? 'I guess it's an open race.' Such was the only topic heard Before the Northern Chase.

'I'll ask Jack Williamson what he thinks Is best for us to back,' 'Why, Despised will win, bar accidents, And Salute comes next,' says Jack.

What's that upstanding young bay horse That Dinnie Morrison rides? By Jove! he moves along the course With fast and rapid strides.

That's Bombardier at the North Shore trained, And I think he'll get a place, And there's that old black horse Sealtheen, But he can't go the pace.

Bombardier's knees like footballs blown, I fancy he will fall, For he is bound to bang himself On every fence and wall.

Fishmonger's looking very fit, And so is Cingalee, Both Potentate and Crazy Kate Are lively as can be.

The flag goes down and off they go Both double hurdles fly, Salute and Fishmonger take the lead With other good ones nigh.

Around the course and up the hill 'Cross post and rails they came, Both stone and mud walls they clear well And the water jump the same.

The second sod wall and water jump Are cleared in splendid style, And yet the pace is none too slow Although they've gone a mile.

The second round is safely past, When Salute he stops to think Why he the water jump should pass Without a drop to drink.

The struggle now will soon commence, There'll be some spills I fear, The horses all are tiring fast Except this Bombardier.

Despised's all out and nearly done, Though Shaw is grafting still To rouse the one-eyed bay along, As they surmount the hill.

McKinnon now to gain a bit, Goes for the inside rail, Despised and Fishy both come down And the others past them sail.

Alick Williams, now on Crazy Kate, Comes rushing down the hill, But Morrison on Bombardier, Is sitting very still.

'Bombardier wins?' 'No, Crazy Kate?' Is yelled by backers loud, 'Bombardier wins, bar accidents,' Is shouted by the crowd.

And as they race around the bend Both jocks ply whip and steel, But Bombardier the faster proves As to the end they peep.

Just here, the excitement getting wild, As homeward bound they run; But very soon the betting crowd Knew Crazy Kate was done.

And then again the cry goes up, As Bomb his last jump takes, 'He'll come down, I'll bet a pound,' 'Not he; he's won the race.'

And so the shouting grew in power Till almost on the jump, Then suddenly dead silence reigned, And many a heart did thump.

See Dicky Duder on the course, He nearly faints with joy, As Morrison takes a good strong pull, Then yells out, 'Over, boy.'

'He's over then,' the cry goes up, Bombardier walks in, What did I say? What tip gave I? I always thought he'd win.'

The dividend was five pounds two, It made the Shore boys glad, And many a round of Walker's best The lucky backers had.

A very popular win it was, The Burkes deserve to win, They're real good sports—I like their luck Although I lost my tin.

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