

supposes a knowledge of Papini's early enmity toward Christianity, his unrestrained denial of orthodox religion which brought him even the term "anti-Christ". Considering the abandonment with which this Italian genius threw himself into his earlier literary expressions, it is not strange that a vagrant suspicion arises now as to the stability of his present vehement protestation of faith. Papini, remember, is only forty-two.

For those who know little of the disillusionments of this tormented soul groping for truth and freedom, the despair over wasted sacrifices which drenched him at the end of the war, his turning toward a faith he once denied loses part of its significance. Papini found peace and truth in Christ, and he is impatient that all others do likewise.

The book of 408 pages is based entirely upon the Gospels. He explains that his is no scientific work, advancing new discoveries. Yet the impassioned style of narration is that of a discoverer eager to reveal his findings for guidance of others. The work is written in scenes rather than in chapters, and not once does the aggressive vigor of the style waver. It is picturesque to the point where colorful word paintings visualize events with heart stirring reality.

In no part of the book does Papini surpass the opening descriptions of the Nativity:

Jesus was born in a stable, a real stable, not the bright, airy portico which Christian painters have created for the Son of David, as if ashamed that their God should have lain down in poverty and dirt. . . . The filthiest place in the world was the first room of the only PURE MAN ever born of woman.

The parable of the prodigal son is one of the finest bits in the book,

giving, against a glowing background of description, the surging thoughts of Papini on fatherhood, on duty, and on life.

Again: "Jesus, like all great souls, loved the country." And throughout the book flashes of simplicity give to the Florentine's effort at relating Christ's teachings to human needs, a unique place in literature. This "Life" is really an expansion of the Gospels, editorialized, philosophized by one of the vital literary forces in Italy today.

Papini is blessed in having his beloved work given to America by Dorothy Canfield Fisher. The rare fortune of being translated by a distinguished writer of finest literary intuitions, who has a perfect knowledge of romance languages, does not often befall a foreign author.

*Life of Christ.* By Giovanni Papini. Freely translated by Dorothy Canfield Fisher. Harcourt, Brace and Co.

## POEMS OLD AND NEW

By David Morton

IT has already become a commonplace to say that Alice Meynell's poetry has made a permanent niche for itself. Those who care for sheer beauty and delicacy of feeling, transpiring in a thin but authentic music, can always turn with confidence to this singer, whose voice was stilled in death a few months ago. The complete edition of the "Poems" contains all of Mrs. Meynell's poetry, from "Preludes" and the "Poems" issued in 1893 to "Last Poems", issued in 1923. Yet the volume does not bulk large. It runs to less than 150 pages, in three sections: "Early Poems", "Later Poems", "Last Poems".

Such an arrangement invites a study of the progress of this poet's art. And what such a study ends with is a turning back to "Earlier Poems" as the richer in feeling, the more moving and convincing, and the more musically wrought. One is tempted to prophesy that time's selective process will yield a larger representation from this group than from the two groups embracing the author's later work. This, despite the fact that such favorites as "The Shepherdess" and "Chimes"—pure music!—and "The Poet to the Birds" are to be found in the subsequent divisions. But these are rather a return to the earlier spirit and manner, and may be considered as belonging, in character, to that part of Mrs. Meynell's production grouped under the title "Early Poems". In these is the fine flowing of a poetic mind indigenous to the tradition of English poetry, and characteristic of it both in method and spirit. The individual note is a rare and beautiful sadness and sweetness of spirit. Through the delicately articulated syllables runs an exquisite music that is thin, but never doubtful or faint.

In the "Later Poems" and "Last Poems" there are increased firmness of touch, a clearer perception, a finer intellectuality—and less feeling and less delicately attenuated music. There is, therefore, less appeal to the purely poetic. One goes back and reads again and again the earlier poems. One admires the accomplishment of the later, and passes on.

It is impossible to speak of Alice Meynell without a mention of religious poetry. After Lionel Johnson and Francis Thompson, she is England's Catholic poet. Yet her religious poems, excellent as they are in workmanship, do not move the

reader so generously nor so profoundly as the free and changing moods of her love poems and nature poems. Time will be long forgetting these latter, if indeed it forgets them ever. They come with a rich contribution for the spirit of man, in their fine poetic perception of the changing phenomenon of life, and they give that contribution in language that approaches pure melody.

It is both too early and too late to offer valuable estimates of the poetry of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt—that untamable Victorian liberal who, until his death last year, was a thorn in the flesh of British imperialism, and an indefatigable worker in poetry. His earlier contemporaries recognized his powers and listed him as an accomplished revolutionary against the prettiness and sweetness of much of the poetry of that era. In contrast, he was a "plain, blunt man". His later contemporaries were apt to lose this flavor of revolt in him—for they had out-Heroded; but it is impossible to miss here and there in his poetry a fine, ringing piece of work of proportions and power. How posterity will rank him, this is not the place to conjecture; but the new edition of his "Poems" will afford an opportunity for just estimate. The volume includes all that the author wished to include—from his first important piece of work, "Esther: A Young Man's Tragedy", to a collection of lyrics written in his later years. In one department of literature, the sonnet, Blunt has made himself secure. Few sequences contain finer sonnets of young and passionate love adventure than "Esther". And in "Love Sonnets of Proteus" the same theme, with somewhat more maturity, is treated effectively, though on the whole the work is less moving.

A book by G. K. C. is sure to be interesting—and "The Ballad of St. Barbara" qualifies. In any serious consideration of fine poetry, it is unimportant. What is of stimulating value is the spectacle of this plumed knight of an ampler and nobler day riding with great gusto at the littleness, the meanness, the "greyness" of modern life. As hungrily as ever Miniver Cheevy, he sighs for the days of romance and chivalry—but not for their outward forms merely. The courage, the daring, the sublime devotion—these he misses as Miniver misses the "grace of mediæval clothing".

The title poem recites, through a critical hour in the late war, the ballad of St. Barbara, the patron saint of artillery and of those in danger of sudden death. It is spirited, vivid, and has beauty. "Mediævalism" is a colorful piece of writing, on the theme of "all that men took too lightly, and all that they love too late". Satirical verses abound—in which the lords of the earth are fixed on a pin. And "Songs of Education" is a stinging satire on the warped littleness of modern life and its aims and processes. Altogether, here is good, thumping, virile verse.

This latest book of Mr. Untermeyer's is written out of an insurgent race consciousness. It is instinct with racial feeling—with a lively awareness of the majestic and colorful historical background, of the race's suffering and hardihood and achievement, of the promised fulfilments. Given this feeling, genuine and unobstructed—which in itself is so nearly pure poetry—plus Mr. Untermeyer's skill and range and vigor, and stirring poetry is assured. The title poem "Roast Leviathan" is an energetic envisioning of the promised

feast for the chosen, the banquet with leviathan for fare. The poem moves with an easy velocity, with an unstudied, almost careless energy. Here is the spirit of eager acceptance of the heritage that waits—too long delayed, but never doubted. "Lost Jerusalem" has in it more of the Jew's consciousness of his bitter and magnificent history—with an evangelical note of divine mission. "Waters of Babylon", one of the most poignant poems in the book, is a lyric of personal love, alive in a race consciousness of old sorrow and hopelessness that suffuses the whole with pity. The love poems and the poems of social protest show Mr. Untermeyer in a familiar rôle. One regrets the inclusion of such undistinguished poems as "The Window", which is commonplace both in theme and treatment, and "Five Trees", a labored effort in analogy. And "Stand With Me Here" is unpersuasive poetizing. Through such carefully constructed conceits as these, "Ghetto Prostitute" and "Daughters of Jephthah" thrust with the convincing lineaments of passionate and suffering life. The division of the book entitled "Sixteen Etchings", including a number of sonnets on various themes, is accomplished verse; it is scarcely fine poetry, and the same may be said of "Insurrections". It is in the division of the book entitled "Waters of Babylon" that Mr. Untermeyer has made a unique and distinguished contribution to poetry.

"So There!" by Franklin P. Adams, conductor of "The Conning Tower" in the New York "World", is capital fun. Here is wit in abundance—smiling satire, rollicking humor, and excellent fooling of many sorts. America—the land of absurdities—is rich pasture for this sort of grazing, and not many of the contemporary earnest

fads fail of a bite. The new poetry, smile week, Freudian extremes, fiction fads, and all the overserious pother so diverting to the emancipated are the mark of deadly gibes. There are, also, the usual "adaptations" of Horace. F. P. A's individual trick of turning the echoes of classical accent to the purposes of absurdity is present with a distinguishing and telling effect. It were nearly needless — in the case of this author — to mention the almost flawless skill in workmanship. The strictness with which the selections for the volume were made is worthy of emulation. It is that rare thing: a funny book without a dull page.

Mrs. Wilkinson's admirers will find in this latest book of hers the same joy in the out of doors — not to be confused with the attitudinizing of the "Nature" cult — that has characterized most of this writer's verse. Here, also, are her characteristic rhythms. It is a forthright music, not overgiven to delicate shadings and elusive accents. The style is suited to the matter, which is not troubled with subtleties. Mrs. Wilkinson stands flatfooted on the earth, foursquare to the winds of the world. She speaks with directness — sometimes with gusto, sometimes with tenderness — of the earth and the sky and the winds, of the fields and the stars and the waters. And if the poetry is not of the high and fine and immortal sort, it is appealing, and its spirit is contagious. Here and there are simple singing lyrics that poetry would be the poorer without. Such are "On Plover Hill", "Mother Song in Spring", and "Our Joys are Many". The title poem — containing some fine passages of power and chanting lyrics — envisions the salvation of Manhattan through the ancient min-

isters of wind and rain and light. What one is particularly grateful for in all of Mrs. Wilkinson's work is the absence of poetizing and prettiness, and the frank, plainspoken delight in the themes of her poems and in life itself.

The Poems of Alice Meynell. (Complete Edition.) Charles Scribner's Sons.  
Poems. By Wilfrid Seawen Blunt. Alfred A. Knopf.  
The Ballad of St. Barbara. By Gilbert Keith Chesterton. G. P. Putnam's Sons.  
Roast Leviathan. By Louis Untermeyer. Harcourt, Brace and Co.  
So There! By Franklin P. Adams. Doubleday, Page and Co.  
The Great Dream. By Marguerite Wilkin-son. The Macmillan Co.

## A SCHOLAR DISCUSSES PUBLIC OPINION

By William Starr Myers

JUST ten years ago there appeared, from the pen of President Lowell of Harvard University, a book entitled "Public Opinion and Popular Government" which since that time has been considered the standard authority upon the subject. No better testimony to this fact could be desired than the estimates by such men as the late Albert Venn Dicey and James Bryce, both of whom spoke of the work as the greatest yet written in this field. For these reasons, the mere announcement that President Lowell has prepared another book of the same general character is bound to arouse interest among scholars and the reading public. Their keenest anticipations will not be disappointed when they experience the satisfaction of scanning this new volume.

It is a real pleasure, as well as satisfaction, to find a book so sound, adequate, and sane in its content. Also