

## A PAGE OF VERSE

### LIVESTOCK

BY V. D. GOODWIN

[*Poetry* (Birmingham)]

*Are not five sparrows sold for three farthings . . . ?*

'SIXPENCE! a linnet in full song!' —  
Smearing the dirty glass, a throng  
Of children looked in curiously.  
Row after row, the cages hold  
Wild birds with throats of gold;  
And their spent eyes looked out at me.

And when I turned away they still  
Looked out, with that one pulsing will  
To escape where no escape can be.  
And still they beat their wings, and beat  
Their breasts and their small feet,  
In that one effort to get free.

'Sixpence! a cock-thrush!' — and the  
sun  
Shone in on every cage; but one  
Stood empty. 'Sixpence! a young  
lark' —

It lay down hidden in the dark.  
Its eyes were sightless — dead.  
'Your Father knoweth,' those eyes  
said.

### THE WEB

BY E. HAMILTON-FELLOWS

[*Westminster Gazette*]

SLOWLY from point to point  
Her web the spider weaves,  
Hanging her flimsy net,  
Trembling, between two leaves.

A delicate, swinging trap,  
Work of minutest care,  
Blown by the merest breath  
To infinite air.

Thus music thread-like spins  
From mind to mind her weft,  
Using as simple aids  
Thin strings and fingers deft.

Hangs it between two worlds,  
A fragile, lovely snare,  
To lure the venturers lone  
Who trespass there.

### LOST YOUTH

BY WILFRID THORLEY

[*Saturday Review*]

HEAVEN's gate for me was once a stile,  
The grassy fields I trod  
Were full of flowers that seemed  
erewhile

As stars that gazed on God;  
And merry birds were cherubim  
That sang in hawthorn trees —  
But now I'm older, now I'm older,  
Where are these?

Once if my feet but fell on grass  
Each one became a wing,  
And I moved on as clouds will pass  
When winds are trumpeting;  
And once to me the soft-spun moss  
Was from an angel's weft —  
But now I'm older, now I'm older,  
What is left?

The feet that flew, the eyes that  
glowed,  
The lamp of faith that shone,  
They fail me now upon the road  
That I must travel on;  
The frost erewhile was holy breath  
For sign upon my panes —  
But now I'm older, now I'm older,  
What remains?

# LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE ARTS

## MEMOIRS OF ALEXANDER II

THE secretary of the late Princess Iurievskaja, the morganatic wife of Emperor Alexander II of Russia, is about to publish the memoirs of Alexander II, the original manuscript of which has hitherto been the property of Princess Iurievskaja. She kept the larger portion of the manuscript in a London bank, later transferring it to Nice. The rest was in the possession of her secretary, M. Markov, in Petrograd, but was later removed from Russia and given to a bank for safe keeping.

The Emperor never intended to publish his memoirs and therefore wrote them as brief notes which will now serve as material for the new book. Princess Iurievskaja was ready to undertake the task of publication of it several years ago, but death interrupted her plans.

The Russian Government had long sought these memoirs. During the reign of Alexander III and Nicholas II many attempts were made to induce Princess Iurievskaja to give them up. But these efforts, as well as those of Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovich, the historian, were all unsuccessful.

The memoirs begin in 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War. Alexander II entirely sympathized with Germany, and speaks highly of William I and his advisers. On the whole, Tsar Alexander had been infatuated with the Germans for a long time, though he became somewhat indifferent to them a short time before his death. It was the policy of Bismarck — 'this insatiable bulldog,' as Alexander II calls him — that threw the Russian Tsar off his balance. The memoirs abound in unkind epithets applied to the Iron Chancellor.

The author's attitude toward the French is one of negligence. He never doubted their defeat. England's policies are sharply criticized in the memoirs. They are plainly called 'mean.' Alexander II feels a deep antagonism to Queen Victoria, naturally describes Disraeli in very dark colors, calls him 'Russia's bitterest enemy,' and thinks that Gladstone was the only gentleman in all England.

Much space is allotted to the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878. The Tsar agrees in a melancholy way that Constantinople is lost to Russia because of his own indecisiveness and of England's intrigues.

The fact that these memoirs were not intended for publication give an especial aspect of truthfulness to the information they contain about his personal life.

The theory of the suicide of Nicholas I is given full confirmation. Alexander II tells how his father's physician, Dr. Karel, was the Emperor's involuntary slayer. He dared not disobey his monarch and gave him the requested poison. It remains a secret, however, whether Dr. Karel intentionally gave him too small a dose, hoping to be able to save his life, or whether the Tsar's strong organism offered unexpected resistance. The established fact is that Nicholas I had suffered violently for several days, and finally, when death drew near, called his children and told them the ghastly truth. He asked them not to make Dr. Karel suffer for his action, which probably explains the fact that this physician stayed among Alexander's staff after his father's death but never enjoyed his favor or confidence.