

do; but he knows where they are to be found, is sure that they are worth following up, takes us again and again into their company, and, with our assistance, as it seems, makes in the end some appreciable approach toward an understanding of them. He does not try to persuade us that we have got to the bottom of them: they live, hence are unfathomable.

In this best achievement of De Morgan's art there is nothing distinctively Victorian—it is precisely what the most "modern" novelists are striving for—for the most part in vain. The theory of his belatedness is further discredited by a little attention to his "plots"—that range of action within which the inevitable delimitations of the author's mind and sympathy leave his creatures free to move. Fancy the theme of "Somehow Good" in the hands of the great Philistine Boz, or the great snob Titmarsh: De Morgan's treatment of it would have been inconceivable to the Early Victorian mind. It is essentially, amazingly modern. It assimilates all that is wholesome and affirmative in our somewhat self-conscious tolerance with regard to sexual matters, and shows how naturally what the Victorians would have disposed of as a lost woman—a woman betrayed by ignorance in girlhood—may be throughout her matronly life a strong, happy creature.

"Somehow Good" still stands, I think, as De Morgan's best work thus far. There he evidently saw his way pretty well from the outset. In "It Never Can Happen Again" he is embarrassed by two distinct themes, or groups of characters, and hardly succeeds in getting them to work together plausibly, though there is one supreme point of contact. The first two chapters open in a way strikingly suggestive of "Joseph Vance" and "Alice-for-Short." "Lizarann," in her slum, with her blind father and her drunken uncle, is very like another Alice. We expect her to emerge, after many quiet adventures, into a kindly and comfortable middle-class circle, where she may marry the amiable young fellow she deserves, and be duly happy. One doubts if the author may not have had himself some such faint foreshadowing. Perhaps he was turned aside by the fear (to which he has owned) of repeating himself. Lizarann is the most enchanting of children, and would have become, we are sure, a maiden worthy of her irresistible forerunners, Lottie and Alice and Sallie. The fact that "Blind Jim" was the original title suggests that Lizarann and Jim Coupland were intended to be the important figures in the book. So in a sense they are, but a small minority of the multitudinous pages of this narrative concern them. They remain, for the most part, an infinitely lovable and pathetic pair, in the

background of the action. In due time Lizarann dies of the consumption to which she is doomed from the outset, and blind one-legged Jim is cut off at the moment when the news of her death is being brought to him. In the act of death he becomes, it is true, the determining factor in the main action. If Lizarann's dying cry had not mysteriously reached her father across those miles of English country he would not have run out upon the highroad, Lord Felixthorpe's car would not have run over him, Sir Alfred Challis would not have been knocked on the head, and Judith Arkroyd would have found herself a little later in a position equivocal, to say the least.

It is with Judith and Challis and his wife, Marianne, that the story as a story is concerned. If it were not for the considerations connected with Deceased Wife's Sisters, the story would have been simple enough, and could have been told in fifty words. But there are such considerations, and many of them; the result is a considerably involved plot.

But it is all unnecessarily ingenious. Surely the author of "Somehow Good" does not need to hatch up this sort of complication. The disappointing thing is that neither Challis nor Judith nor Marianne is quite worth the infinite attention we are called upon to pay them. Perhaps the trouble is that one finds it hard to like any of them thoroughly. The warm personal affection wrung from us by the chief characters in the other novels remains untouched by this minutely exhibited trio—though it goes forth readily enough to several of the other characters: Lizarann, Jim, the Reverend Athelstan Taylor, and his Adeline. Unfortunately, the Deceased Wife's Sister group have the floor the greater part of the time. I am not sure that the impatient mind may not be justified of its impatience as to the lengths, linear measure, to which is carried the discussion of them.

But it would be sad to believe that no more volumes as portly were to come from this in all senses genial hand.

H. W. BOYNTON.

#### THE POETRY OF FATHER TABB.

Father Tabb was not only a poet, but a scholar, and he would permit us to approach his somewhat singular work in a spirit of academic classification. And first his mood was eminently gnomical and sententious. A poem exceeding the measure of the sonnet was exceptional with him. He not merely limited the number of lines, but their length. The pithy octosyllable was his favorite form, and shorter lines are common. Nearly the whole of his work consists of epigrams in the Greek sense. These miniature poems recall the passages that one extracts from the more discursive meditations of Henry Vaughan or our own

Emerson. But no one is tempted to excerpt from Father Tabb. One quotes the entire poem or nothing. Nor is this lack of salient line or phrase a defect. Examine these epigrams microscopically, and no member but shows some curious felicity, some delicate modelling touch of the file. These tiny gnomes are calculated wholes, structures so unitary that decoration is almost excluded. This work has an odd artificial naturalness, to find a parallel for which I am driven to the minor arts of Japan. You will recall how an artisan of Nippon, finding a knot of wood, a water-worn lump of amber, or the bleached tooth of a beast, will work out some most ingenious and expressive bit of sculpture by the slightest modifications of the natural form. He seems to be indeed less of a creator than a discoverer and exhibitor of some casual beauty already existing. And so many of Father Tabb's best poems give the impression of simply occurring under a hand that gives only the ultimate contour. Take

#### THE BIRTH OF A WORLD.

A hidden world,  
Unwombing, hurled  
From dark to light.  
And to the skies  
Its wondering eyes  
The livelong night

Doth Science turn, with sighs  
When shadows take their flight.

Another birth—  
A soul to earth  
But newly come!  
Its destiny  
Eternity.

With wonder dumb,  
The heavens look down to see  
Our faces turned therefrom.

Here is a wonderful knot on the two sides of which the skilful carver, perceiving two solemn masks, has with reverent solicitude merely cut away the obscuring fibres.

On several of his title-pages is found the word lyrics. It seems to me a misnomer. Elaborately musical as his verse is, it has little singing quality. We find in these miniature structures not the free and spontaneous gush of song, but the balanced and calculated forms of concerted music. And here the outer form corresponds perfectly to the inner mood. These poems are products of meditation, they suggest quite as much a way of thinking as a mode of feeling. In fact, for most of them one could find a quite definite formula. All this relates Father Tabb to those English poets who by a stretch of language are called metaphysical, Donne and Vaughan being the perfect examples of the tendency. But there was something so finely traditional, so eminently Christian and Catholic, about Father Tabb's formula, that his conceits seem purged of personal whim. At all times Christians have believed that the visible world is but a glass in which we see darkly the image of God

Childish as the process seems to the eye of skepticism, this habit of regarding the outer world as a provider of *exempla* which must be converted into spiritual values has been profoundly salutary, and if its literary fruits have been too often barren allegory, it has also kept alive a fanciful and questioning attitude toward nature. This is soil in which the imagination may thrive. The danger for poets of this allegorizing temper is that of writing into the ensample book of nature their own hasty answers; and the critical question with regard to such poets is, how far intellectual ingenuity has usurped the place of authentic imagination. Now is not the time to weigh Father Tabb in this balance. To me personally it seems he veered now inward to his own agile fancy, now outward to the gradual undertone of nature, as his mood and inspiration served. A poem like the following, one of his subtlest, will bear either classification, in which case the pragmatist tells us the distinction really doesn't matter:

## DUST TO DUST.

"In the centre of each snow-crystal or drop of rain, is found a minute particle of dust."

Earth wedded, life atwain  
In heaven, were endless pain,  
Uplifted from the plain  
To realms of snow or rain,  
Of dust each lonely grain  
To dust will come again.

To me, however, this seems a border-line poem of an especially instructive sort. Its quality is, I think, genuinely imaginative, but a fuller inspiration would have drawn the prose text into the rhythmical homily. To exemplify the difference between Father Tabb possessed by his theme and merely playing with it, I need only cite one of his most engaging conceits:

## SHEET LIGHTNING.

A glance of love or jealousy,  
It flashes to and fro—  
A swift sultan's majesty,  
Through Night's seraglio;  
  
Where many a starry favorite,  
In reverence profound,  
Awaits, with palpitating light,  
A step without a sound.

It is odds whether Father Tabb is most likely to be remembered by a few little masterpieces of this frankly artificial sort, or by those poems that reach deeper issues. I sometimes fear that, in the mood of sheer artistry and moral detachment he is most perfect.

At any rate, for sheer lapidary perfection, Father Tabb hardly has his mate among American poets, or for that matter, among the English poets of his time. Even Aldrich had a vaguer sense of his own limitations and was more frequently below his best. Except for the French poet Heredia, with his sin-

gle sheaf of sonnets, I can hardly name a modern poet whose garden being so small is at once so habitable and so impressive. At Father Tabb's more obvious affinity, Emily Dickinson, I can only glance. It seems to me that he contains in far finer form pretty much everything that is valuable in her thought. He, too, has his lapses. The intricate balance of his little poems made the construction of each almost as much of a technical adventure as the framing of an ode, and he did not always come out well. I could, but will not, cite a number of poems where the allegory will bite a sensitive reader.

Within the permitted space, I can merely hint at the variety contained within limits apparently narrow. We have seen that most of the poems are parables in little. The texts are usually furnished by the singing birds, thickets, meadows, and hills of the Maryland Blue Ridge. Except for the simpler Bible Stories, there is rarely a suggestion of history. The verses are profoundly literary, yet one hardly guesses what latent influences from older poetry may have transpired. The world of struggling men and women is held far away. Occasional intimations of a love become reminiscent hardly constitute a bond. We have to do simply with the transaction between nature and a curiously meditative mind.

The life that so tranquilly expressed itself in poetry was a broken one. Born in Virginia, in 1845, John Bannister Tabb gave his youth to the Confederacy. His education had been solitary, from tutors, from whom, perhaps, like Vaughan before him, he got an inkling of "logicals." He puts himself down modestly as a "clerk" in the Confederate navy. Serving on the blockade-runner Robert E. Lee, he had the unclerkly privilege of being shot at without returning the fire. After many successful trips to the British East Indies, the Lee was captured, and "Johnny T." as his shipmates called him, sent to the military prison at Point Lookout, Maryland. There Sidney Lanier found him, and their life-long friendship began. At the age of twenty-seven, we find John B. Tabb a Catholic proselyte already in deacon's orders, and a belated undergraduate of St. Charles' College, Ellicott City, Maryland. This institution, with occasional interruptions, he served as a professor of English literature until his death. In his thirty-ninth year, he was ordained priest. Whether the twelve years' delay implies a mental hesitation, or mere inertia, whether one may link with it those more lyrical poems of unrequiring love that appear in his first volume, we, perhaps, have no right to ask. In any case, postponement was almost the rule of Father Tabb's life. The only thing regular about it was the tireless cultivation of the solitary muse. The magazines soon gave him recogni-

tion, and his name became a bond between readers of a certain discernment, but he was nearing fifty before the first of those little square volumes saw the light, in 1894.

Of his personal predilections, except that he was a cultivated lover of music and a pianist of no mean accomplishment, one knows only what may be gathered from his verse. Possibly some of his associates of St. Charles may supply the personalia one craves, but this were better left undone than done indiscreetly. About two years ago, the blindness that for years had threatened him became imminent. It found pathetic reflection in his poetry. There were rumors that he was in want and dependent upon the bounty of his college. This he denied in a characteristic note to the *Nation* (August 27, 1908), in which he declared that despite the wishes of his associates, he would live in college just so long as his savings availed to support him and no longer. Happily, the dire issue never arose, for death overtook him among his colleagues and on the scene of his long labors as a teacher.

Father Tabb had his rebel side. His correspondents could tell of whimsical drawings and pungent limericks of most unpriestly, if innocent, stamp. Some of these oddities, I believe he printed in a volume which I have not by me. I fear they made but a poor showing in the types, though they were heartening enough in his own fine chirography.

Father Tabb was the poet of the single metaphor. His sonnets reveal this strikingly. They follow usually the consecrated formula. "As" leading the octave; "so" announcing the sestet. Their lack of density as compared with his briefer forms reveals the tenuity of the ingredients. To borrow a pertinent term from the graphic arts, he was one of the "little masters" of the metaphor. Take from his first volume that audacious but eminently Catholic conceit:

## OUT OF BOUNDS.

A little Boy of heavenly birth,  
But far from home to-day,  
Comes down to find His ball, the Earth,  
That Sin has cast away.  
O comrades, let us one and all,  
Join in to get Him back His ball!

I know of no poem that illustrates better the artful simplicity, the whimsical mating of sheer imagination and pure conceit that make Father Tabb to his readers simply one of the most engaging figures in poetry. He would have been the last one to regard such personal enthusiasms as final measures of literary values. Yet gratitude for a gift that never presumed, never imposed itself, never sunk to commonplace, is more in order now than criticism.

Father Tabb's intimate and genuine feeling for correspondences is fully expressed in the poem "Fraternity," with which this brief tribute may fittingly close. The stanzas might have been call-



ed more ambitiously "Predestination Unto Poesy."

I know not but in every leaf  
That sprang to life along with me,  
Were written all the joy and grief  
Thenceforth my fate to be.

The wind that whispered to the earth,  
The bird that sang its earliest lay,  
The flower that blossomed at my birth—  
My kinsmen all were they.

Ay, but for fellowship with these  
I had not been—nay, might not be;  
Nor they but vagrant melodies  
Till harmonized by me.

FRANK JEWETT MATHER, JR.

#### NEWS FOR BIBLIOPHILES.

Among collectors the books of Poe are still in the ascendant. On the evening of November 22, the large sum of \$3,800 was paid for Mr. Maier's copy of that thin pamphlet, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1843), which has been already referred to in this column. This is the highest price ever paid at public auction for any American printed book. There are a few other American books which, if they were to come upon the market would undoubtedly surpass this record, such, for example, as the Bay Psalm Book (1640), the first book printed within the limits of the present United States; the first Massachusetts Laws (1648), and the first New York Laws (1694). These are all much older books. One other modern book is as valuable—Poe's first book, "Tamerlane and Minor Poems" (Boston, 1827). Of this, which may be considered the most valuable nineteenth-century printed book in existence, three copies only are known, two, both perfect and with the covers, being in the library of F. R. Halsey of this city, and one, lacking the covers, in the British Museum.

Two thousand nine hundred dollars was paid at the same sale for the interesting association copy of Poe's second book, "Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems" (Baltimore, 1829). This, as we noted last week, was the copy used by Poe when preparing for the press the collection of his poems published in 1845 as "The Raven and Other Poems." In that book the following note, signed "E. A. P.," was prefixed to the section "Poems of Youth":

Private reasons—some of which have reference to the sin of plagiarism, and others to the date of Tennyson's first poems—have induced me, after some hesitation, to republish these, the crude compositions of my earliest boyhood. They are printed verbatim—without alteration from the original edition—the date of which is too remote to be judiciously acknowledged.

Notwithstanding this statement these poems are not "printed verbatim." The variations are numerous as shown by the alterations in Poe's autograph in the Maier copy. Another peculiarity of this copy is that the date of imprint instead of 1829 is (or seems to be) 1820. The late J. C. Chamberlain, who examined the book when it came up in the Harold Peirce sale in Philadelphia in 1903, was of the opinion that the date had been altered in ink from 1829 to 1820 and by Poe himself. His purpose was, Mr. Chamberlain surmised, to show a book which antedated Tennyson's first volume of verse, the "Poems of Two

Brothers" (1827), which is referred to in the note quoted above. If this could be proven it would make the volume still more interesting. It is certainly, as we said before, the most interesting "association" Poe book in existence.

The most important items in the second Haber sale, which will be held by the Anderson Auction Company on December 7 and 8, afternoons and evenings, are the early editions of the works of Edmund Spenser. They include the first edition of "The Faerie Queene," both parts (1590-1596), also a second set with the first part, second edition (1596), and the first and second folio editions (1609 and 1611), the "Complaints" (1591), "The Shepheard's Calendar" (1591), and "Colin Clouts Come Home Again" (1595).

Among other early English books are Langland's "Vision of Piers Plowman," the second edition (1550); More's "Utopia," first edition in English (1551); Puttenham's "Arte of English Poesie" (1589); the "Mirrour for Magistrates" (1610); Phaer and Twyne's translation of Virgil (1596); Milton's "Poems," first edition (1645), and the second edition (1673); "Paradise Lost" (1667), with the second title-page, and with the seven preliminary leaves added from a later issue; Shirley's "Poems" (1646), and Killigrew's "Comedies and Tragedies" (1664).

Among books by American authors, the Whittier items are perhaps the most interesting. Mr. Haber's "Mogg Megone" (1836) is the copy given to Miss Lucy Hooper, and the letter of presentation accompanies the book; his "Narrative of James Williams" (1838) is accompanied by Whittier's letter acknowledging the authorship of the book; and his "Moll Pitcher" (1832), is the Foote copy with two letters from the author relating to it, in which he says, under date of April 22, 1834: "I doubt whether any copy of 'Moll Pitcher' is extant. It was a mere pamphlet and only a few copies printed."

The oldest book in the collection is a fine copy of that famous picture book of the Middle Ages, the "Nuremberg Chronicle" (1493), which contains upwards of 2,000 wood-cuts. This copy contains the numbered leaves at the end which were left blank, in order that the owner might write in a continuation of the history.

On December 6, Stan. V. Henkels will sell in Philadelphia a collection of autograph letters and historical documents, mainly from the correspondence of Elbridge Gerry, including fine specimens of many Revolutionary names.

In presenting One Hundred Famous First Editions in English and French Literature, Ernest Dressel North, No. 4 East Fifty-ninth Street, has been guided quite as much by literary interest as by bibliographical rarity. The earliest volume is Sidney's "Arcadia," 1590, with six facsimile leaves. Only ten copies of this book are known in any state. The latest item is the modest volume, Whittier's "Snow Bound," 1866.

Between these terms there is much of interest that can only be glanced at. Milton's "Paradise Lost," with the second title page—or is it the first? the doctors disagree; Goldsmith's "The Vicar of Wakefield"; Butler's "Hudibras" with the sequels; De Foe's "Robinson Crusoe," all three parts; the thin pamphlet in which FitzGerald pub-

lished the first English Rubáiyát—here are some of the most striking exhibits. The original issue of the "Tattler" and "Rambler" are to the layman among the more inviting volumes.

In sheer rarity, all yield to Robert Burns's "Poems," the third edition, 1787. This copy is in its original binding, and throughout the skeletonized proper names have been filled in in the poet's handwriting.

There is an excellent catalogue, with full literary and bibliographical indications. The exhibition extends from December 1 to 14, and will appeal equally to bibliophiles and unpretentious gentle readers.

## Correspondence.

#### ENGLISH FOOTBALL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: In your article on "The Football Deaths" (the *Nation*, November 4), you mention the reluctance of the football rules committee to change the game

in such a way that it will resemble the English, or soccer, game, in which players are not allowed to run carrying the ball. The chief argument we have heard against this change is that the English game is not an exciting enough contest for the young American.

Permit me to point out that "soccer" is not "the" English game, and that it is not an exciting enough contest for most young Englishmen. In the English universities two games of football are played—Association, or "soccer," and Rugby. Rugby, in which the player is allowed to run carrying the ball, is somewhat the more popular. But neither game has the universal vogue among schools and colleges which the American game enjoys. At Eton, for instance, neither game is regularly played; there are instead two local varieties of football, the "wall game" and the "field game," both differing widely from the games played at the universities. Winchester and Harrow also have games of their own. In the colonies Rugby is played in a way which seems to tend toward something like the American game.

There is, therefore, no game which occupies in England the position held by football in America, and the English universities have no predominant autumn sport. There are rowing events of some importance, track meets, hare and hound runs, and golf tournaments. Lacrosse has been introduced, and has met with some favor. Hockey—which we call "shinny" and relegate to vacant city lots—is nearly as popular as "soccer" football. But no one of these games is absorbing enough to arouse universal interest and displace its rivals. A few hundred undergraduates watch the more important "rugger" games, but no match except the Oxford-Cambridge is played on a field provided with seating arrangements for a large audience.

Those who have followed football on both sides of the Atlantic believe it would be a useless retrogression to attempt a modification of American football in the direction of either Rugby or "soccer." It is not the rules that make the English game safe. The excessive softness of the ground, which is covered with very thick turf and rarely freezes or even dries out in the football