

Books and Things

ALTHOUGH we may nowadays treat the Golden Treasury too much like a common anthology, as if it were only a convenient place for meeting old friends, yet at one time or another we have all admired, some of us without help and some not until Matthew Arnold had shown us how to admire, the beautiful putting together of its pieces, the way in which many of them gain, from their setting among the right neighbors, something of color or meaning or sound.

Those who perceive for themselves, or those who can perceive with assistance—which class do we belong to? "The Spirit of Man" will not help us to an answer, for in this new anthology, made by the poet laureate, Robert Bridges, and published a year ago (Longmans, Green & Company, \$1.50), the arrangement is so winning that he must be a dull reader who can withstand its action. Perfection of arrangement was no doubt easier for Mr. Bridges to approach than for Palgrave. "The Spirit of Man" is not a collection "of the best songs and lyrical poems in the English language." Its aim is to illustrate and support the belief "that spirituality is the basis and foundation of human life." Prose and verse in English and French are admitted, and so are translations from the Russian, from Greek and Latin, and things brought from the East. A purpose so much more special than Palgrave's gave Mr. Bridges material more homogeneous, less refractory, not so hard to put in order.

The success of his chosen order is obvious if we will read his book as he would have us read it, beginning at the beginning and going straight ahead. He leads us in all ease from mood to mood, takes us with him all the way, leaves us rested and bettered by the journey. His taste and art allow us to feel, for a short time and in the case of some of us perhaps for the last time, the beauty of those spiritual moods to which nowadays we do not rise by accident, nor yet by will, nor at all without the help of strong hands. I know that while I was reading his book the other day I had an illusion that I was growing physically lighter, that not only did my eyes look up through the clouds to serener spaces, but that I was carried gently upward to them, and breathed for a while those brighter, purer and austerer airs where Mr. Bridges lives and is at home, nor ever suffers from mountain sickness. Great must be the persuasiveness of an anthology which can lift a heavy body to uncongenial spiritual heights.

Coming down to earth again, later, I asked how it was that I, whose soul is no frequenter of the uplands, visiting them but seldom and never staying long, had been so submissive to Mr. Bridges. Why had I not been on guard against being exalted? Why had I not resisted this unfamiliar refining process? And the answer, when it came, came as a surprise. Mr. Bridges has printed the names of his authors at the end of his book. "It is true," he writes, "that very often we cannot fully understand a passage unless we know who wrote it; on the other hand it is an idle and pernicious habit to ask for information on any question before bringing one's own judgment to bear upon it; and this book may even have a secondary usefulness in providing material for the exercise of literary judgment, in those who have any taste for the practice." This exercise in literary judgment, made possible because Mr. Bridges has printed nearly all his pieces without names, kept me from suspecting that I was growing too spiritual to be true. Vanity's strongest instinct is the instinct of self-preservation, but vanity also likes to run

risks. Sometimes I tried to guess who wrote what I was reading, sometimes I tried only to guess the writer's epoch. My mistakes were many, as when I failed to give Thomas à Kempis his own, and could not put Marcus Aurelius near his right century. Most of all was I vexed when I ascribed to Pascal, of whom I judge as the good judges do, a piece written by Amiel, whom I like but feebly, believing the good judges rate him too high. And in general I found, whenever I was certain of an author's name, that it was memory which made me certain, and not insight.

Perhaps the spirituality in this book would seem too spiritual if one's attention were not taken off it by the exercise in literary judgment. At times the wish to attribute rightly is on top, and at times this disappears and one attends only to the wisdom or beauty or high mind of the written things. Thus a reader's attention, turning from this hand to that hand, keeps its strength without faltering, has even strength to spare for a hundred and one details, for the skill with which the high color of Bacon or of Burke is placed so as not to seem out of harmony with its quieter surroundings, for the contrast, in Mr. Bridges's own subtly-rhythmed quantitative hexameters, between the pattern made by the quantities and the pattern made by the stressed syllables. Now the patterns coincide, now they have separated and each is trying to get possession of the listener's ear. Now we move with the stressed syllables against the stream of the quantities, now the stressed syllables and the long syllables are the same for a few feet, and what we hear is less complex and moves faster. Newer and more varied rhythms are given to the ear in the experiments Mr. Bridges has made in quantitative verse than in all the free verse I have read.

Besides his hexameters from Virgil and Homer Mr. Bridges has put into this book "a few half-original verse-translations," and a few of his improvements upon other translators' work. A study of these reworkings of older versions will delight anybody who likes to perceive, in these small and transforming touches, how small a change may make how great a difference. But on the whole Mr. Bridges has feared too much "a perpetual temptation to quote from himself." I wish he had felt this temptation oftener. Here we have only one poem by Robert Bridges. I wish he had put in the last one in Book V of his "Shorter Poems," for I know of no poem, anywhere, that better expresses the final mood in which his anthology would leave us:

Weep not to-day: why should this sadness be?

Learn in present fears
To o'ermaster those tears
That unhindered conquer thee.

Think on thy past valour, thy future praise:

Up, sad heart, nor faint
In ungracious complaint,
Or a prayer for better days.

Daily thy life shortens, the grave's dark peace

Draweth surely nigh,
When good-night is good-bye;
For the sleeping shall not cease.

Fight, to be found fighting: nor far away

Deem, nor strange thy doom.
Like this sorrow 'twill come,
And the day will be to-day.

P. L.

A New Novelist

Windy McPherson's Son, by Sherwood Anderson. New York: John Lane Co. \$1.40.

"WINDY MCPHERSON" has a Scottish sound. It suggests a revival of those quaint Hoot Man novels that once enabled Ian MacLaren and J. M. Barrie and the author of "The Lilac Sunbonnet" to make hay. To pump up enthusiasm for such a novel at this date would be perverse rather than heroic, and the honest reader might well shrink from being asked to admire another variation in plaid styles. But there is no need for aversion in this instance. It is only Mr. Sherwood Anderson's title that implies gnarled dialect and thorn-tree humor. "Windy McPherson's Son" has nothing whatever to do with the bonnie blue bell or the bonnie brier bush, it was not written out of love for the bonnie bonnie banks of Loch Lomond, or the still more bonnie bonnie Bank of Scotland.

A Chicago man born in a small middle-western town, Mr. Anderson has written a novel of the life he himself knows. He begins with Caxton, Iowa. Sam McPherson, the son of that "Windy" who indulged in G. A. R. ballyhoo, is the newsboy of his little town on the railway line between Omaha and Chicago. Sam is reticent and keen and efficient in inverse ratio to the drunkenness and wind and waste of his father. After his mother's death the boy makes Chicago. In the commission business on South Water Street he founds his fortune. He steps up into the management of an arms corporation, gets to the top, marries the daughter of the president, and faces life on a spiritual plane where keenness and efficiency alone are not enough. After a few years of life on the terms that his wife predicates, McPherson sees a chance to have himself count in a consolidation that will require him to eliminate his wife's bombastic father if he is to go through. He does go through and his wife leaves him. The rest of the story is fabulous success followed by degeneration, then by a revolutionary attempt to reach happiness and significance, and finally by an acceptance of a common lot.

One hardly needs to be told that this is the work of a new novelist. Although it embodies a wisdom of experience not often traceable in a beginner's fiction, it has a freshness that belongs to the springtime of creation. It is not merely a novel of personal fortunes. It is a novel of the meaning of life. Where a more practised novelist might have been content to tell a story, Mr. Anderson has sought to give expression to those long thoughts which so enamor the young novelist, which so often break in the weaving like a gossamer too thin to be spun. In his failure as well as in his success Mr. Anderson has gone far beyond most of his contemporaries. Where he has failed, that is to say, he has proved a larger genuineness than most of his contemporaries prove by their success. This failure is not, of course, a warranty that Mr. Anderson is now a Great Novelist, and so on. But it is part of that bravery of the spirit without which no novel can be incorporated by its reader.

If "Windy McPherson's Son" is not successfully genuine all through, it is perhaps because of Mr. Anderson's zealousness to project all of a destiny. Knowing quite thoroughly the man who is out to win, self-made, combative, daring, shrewd, self-reliant, strong, Mr. Anderson appears to have wanted to give him his climax at any cost, for the sake of the downfall afterward. With that in mind, Mr. Anderson was satisfied to represent rather thinly and poorly the relations between Sue Rainey and Sam Mc-

TIFFANY & Co.

JEWELRY
OF PROVEN VALUE AND QUALITY

FIFTH AVENUE AND 37TH STREET
NEW YORK

Pherson. Sue Rainey is excellently described in the exacerbation of her first tragic pregnancy, and its effect on her husband's ideal of her is well imagined. But what one most wants, Sue's version of herself in her relation to this mailed warrior, is not completely realized. Of course, we have at the start the formula of their relations. She says: "I am wealthy. You are able and you have a kind of undying energy in you. I want to give both my wealth and your ability to children—our children. That will not be easy for you. It means giving up your dreams of power. Perhaps I shall lose courage. Women do after two or three have come. You will have to furnish that. You will have to make a mother of me and keep making a mother of me. You will have to be a new kind of father with something maternal in you. You will have to be patient and studious and kind. You will have to think of these things at night instead of thinking of your own advancement. You will have to live wholly for me because I am to be their mother, giving me your strength and courage and your good sane outlook on things. And then when they come you will have to give all these things to them day after day in a thousand little ways." Waiving the question of Sam's ability to give his ability to his children, there is much difficulty about believing that any Sue could say this to any Sam. Granted that it is an accurate formula, that it expresses what every woman is supposed to feel, it reads much more like an author's reasoned memorandum than like a girl's actual announcement.

This speech is a fair example of a common kind of novelistic speech that does not seem to have the texture of life. Even if the critic is wrong in thinking that a woman seldom has so conscious a program for the selection and direc-