

... With ... BOOK and VERSE

By "John O'Dreams"

Prize Poem Competition

THE prize of half a guinea for the current competition is awarded to "The Crystal Age," by R.B.C. This poem has elusive beauty, and is phrased in original form. We shall hope to see more of the work of this contributor, who is new to our columns. We like, also, the lines forwarded by "Civis," which display facility of expression, and are thoughtful and interesting, though a certain roughness of finish is at times discernible. "John Storm" sends verses instinct with quiet sentiment. Our contributor is not at his admirable best in the two poems under notice, though his work is never without appeal.

"Lucibel Lee" forwards a collection of her graceful rhymelets, including one anent those "sweet cities" that so lately toppled to their doom "like packs of cards." This, however, like other poems we have read on the same subject, is totally inadequate to so catastrophic a calamity.

W.W.: That a garden is a lovesome spot, Got wot! we've all known since Adam and Eve walked together. All the more reason that, when using it as motif of a poem, the treatment should be distinctive, which unhappily is not the case in "Just Linger."

"A Picture," framed by a tramcar window, is the subject of this effort, which conveys love of beauty but none of the glamour thereof.

"A Promise": We applaud the spirit of patriotism, but its expression is faulty.

"Wild Rose": As usual in your poetry, spiritual response to beauty is apparent, but we would prefer the second line to read, "They bend softly to sigh." Avoid the split infinitive as you would the evil one.

D.A.S. has achieved the well-nigh impossible literary feat of deifying the "Dawn" without exuding "pearlies" and "earlies" and sentimental verbiage of the more obvious variety. We do not recollect any recent treatment of this trite inspiration approaching his in originality and vigour.

"Comfort Ye": Religious sentiment admirable, but alas, the technique!

... The Crystal Age ...

Let us be glad,
Ye that escaped from death.
Let us go down into a green valley,
Where a river is flowing,
Steadily, calmly, unconcernedly flowing.
And sitting us down beneath the trees
Let us gaze at the sky,
Hearing a bird that calls in the bush,
And be for ever
Imperturbably calm.

Then shall ascend from our thinking
A perfume, rolling, amassing,
Like fragrant smoke that rises at even
From a smouldering fire,
And is beautiful.

—R.B.C.

TO those who appreciate a droll and diverting narrative, I recommend "Leave it to Susan," by K. R. G. Browne. This is an amusing hotch-potch of the adventures of a heterogeneous collection of people who for one night find themselves the guests in a conventional English country house. Here is modern youth, daring, destructive, and far from dull; an alcoholic admiral, and his unwilling, highly mirth-provoking escapades; English-

women who are true to life; a Frenchman who is excellent. Entertaining to a degree are the struggles of this foreigner with our vernacular; and even the most inveterate Mrs. Gummidge would smile on reading of the sports parade in which Monsieur Pepin and the butler reluctantly take part, with the frisky great Dane as runner-up. The types are soundly envisaged, and the volume is cordially recommended as an excellent remedy for the prevailing depression.

MR. ARCHIBALD MARSHALL, sometimes called the later-day Trollope, has recently published a tale of the everyday life of people in English country houses. The fortunes of two groups are followed in Mr. Marshall's characteristically vivacious fashion through three generations, the tale taking its leisurely course from the far-back sixties down to the year of the Armistice.

WE learn from a contributor to the "Sunday Times" that Mr. Arthur Symons, penetrating and accomplished student of letters, who links our own time with the later Victorian era, has just published a book on one of the most distinctive writers of that period. Forty-four years ago Mr. Symons opened his literary career with a study of Browning; now he carries on with a treatise on the art and thought of Oscar Wilde. The writer quotes Edmund Gosse's conversation with a distinguished Frenchman of letters. "There are two of your modern authors," said the eminent foreigner, "of whom I have heard much. One is Alceen, whose works I have still to read. The other, whom I greatly admire, is Skarvildy." It took Gosse some time to discover that the writers referred to were Hall Caine and Oscar Wilde!

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