

... With ... BOOK and VERSE

By "John O'Dreams"

PRIZE POEM COMPETITION

THERE are those in New Zealand who know and treasure certain poems by John Freeman appearing in one or two anthologies. After his death, lamentably when only forty-eight years of age, a collection of his Last Poems was made, and is now available to that small and select band of literature lovers who have received his work with acclamation. The interest and beauty of this last book of verses is enhanced by introduction by Mr. J. C. Squire, and I cannot do better than quote from his acknowledgement of the quality of Freeman's work: "He did not wear his heart on his sleeve, but those who are fit may find the key, and when they do they will discover that, except only the late Robert Bridges, he was love's truest scholar among modern poets. Were all his love poetry assembled, Swinburne's words might far more aptly be applied to it than to Gautier's scented novel: 'This is a golden book of spirit and sense.'"

A FAR cry indeed from sickly-sweet romances of past days to Mr. Temple Thurston's latest thriller, "Man in a Black Hat." Here we have a weird protagonist, who combines ancient lore and mystery, rendering him able at will to roam amid mysterious occult forces, while miraculously preserving youth and ability to snap fingers at darkness of death. This is a novel that will be read eagerly from cover to cover by those who, in dim hours of midnight, like flesh to creep and hair to stiffen in vicarious horror and amaze.

THOSE who aspire to histrionic prominence assuredly should study Miss Kate Emil-Behnke's "Speech and Movement on the Stage," recently published by the Oxford University Press. At a time when there is so unmistakable a recrudescence of interest in the drama, a perusal of its useful pages is to be commended. In the prevailing slipshod speech, the author deplores the fact that unaccented vowels are frequently omitted, so that "To be or not to be" becomes "T' be or not t' be," while Juliet often is guilty of "Come, file" instead of "Come, phial!" A bank in the Strand becomes a bank in the Strend, and in place of "educate" unlovely use is made of "ejuicate." "Fo-rinstance" is an ugly, and, alas, very common, instance of mispronunciation. Among other aspects of technique dealt with are verse-speaking, physical carriage, and voice-training. Altogether a valuable volume for those who aspire to the boards, and also for those who don't!

THE prize of half a guinea in the current competition is awarded to M.W.S., whose "Sonnet—Just England" we feel sure will appeal to lovers of verse by reason of its beauty of thought and phraseology. Selected for commendation, though widely differing in subject and treatment, are poems on "Music" and "Shelley," by "Oh Mack" and D.A.S. respectively. In its lilting cadences the former justifies its title, while the latter is arresting in treatment of lonely life and death of that prince of poesy, Percy Bysshe Shelley.

"Bashieu": Your sad little plaint and prayer is carefully composed, but does not rise above mediocrity.

K.M.N.: A sweet and joyous lay, showing poetic comprehension, but somewhat over-repetitive.

"Alone": A gentle songlet of heart-hunger.

M.W.S.: We liked your interesting comments, and agree with your admiration of aristocratic background of sonnet form in the world of letters. However, ballad or triolet or sonnet sequence, ancient or modern, so long as a degree of quality exists, each has its interest.

"In Place of Fear": This contribution exudes life and animation, but shows frequent tendency to lapse into the colloquial.

"Heraclitus": We like your impressionistic etching of a wanderer in a city street, which has the authentic atmosphere.

"Yvonne Mack": Your lines fail to scan, and lack the gracious spark that transmutes prose into poetry.

"Zuyder Zee": We rejoice in the suggestion of humour imparted to your erratic lines.

"Prue": "The Wreck of the Hesperus" is a poetic gem in comparison with "Blue Water Beyond," of which it has obviously been the inspiration.

"Evangeline": "Still is the song of the Dairy!" Shades of Longfellow!

... Sonnet—Just England ...

When palsied Winter grasps with icy hold,
And stricken birds of joys have ceased to sing;
When trees no longer echo with the ring
Of thrushes—long since gone to skies less cold;
Then everywhere, around the fire, is told—
As children to their fathers' arm-chairs cling—
A tale of how Sir Knight contrived to bring
A captive princess from a castle old.
While, close without, by fields of glistening white,
The poplar trees are swaying to and fro,
There now is heard a singing in the night,
As if some mighty voice, now chanting low,
And now ascending to some heavenly height,
Admired the scene that Winter painted so.

—M.W.S.

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MR. SIEGFRIED SASOON has followed up his already brilliant literary achievement with "Memoirs of an Infantry Officer." Mr. Sassoon's wonderful and terrible poetry, once read, lingers long in the memory as bitter comment on the fury and horror of life in the trenches in the nightmare of the war years. With the passing of time, however, which mercifully brings something of oblivion, this young and gifted writer would seem to have shed much of his revolt against fate. His latest book is an account of his experiences as a Welsh Fusilier in the line, in camp, and in hospital. Mr. Sassoon no longer dwells on horror piled on horror, but gives a succinct and vivid portrayal of events and personages that came within his line of vision and action. Those familiar with his imaginative vision and poetic quality will look eagerly for this outstanding addition to war literature.

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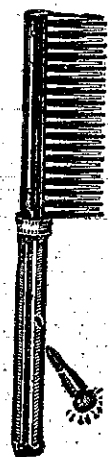
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