

# ... With ... BOOK and VERSE

By "John O'Dreams"

## Jottings

STARTING with "Tom Brown," we have gone on down the years, reading innumerable school stories, hoping to discover another masterpiece. "Early Closing," by D. Wynne Wilson, is perhaps not that masterpiece, but is a delightfully told tale of the ways and works of the inhabitants of a large English public school.

Once upon a time, the book tells us, there was a house-master called William, who feared God, mistrusted the Government, and moulded other men's sons to the best of his ability. And this house-master looms large in the story, for he is comprehending of spirit, witty of tongue, and sometimes very wise. The tale also concerns Nigel and Johnny Bentley, and their sister Lavender, who rather wistfully was aware she was no more to them than "a facetious creature who met them and saw them off, wrote exaggerated accounts of trivial home doings, and took an annoying interest in their affairs."

Also skilfully portrayed are diverse interests and personalities of the microcosm, and lesser tragedies and triumphs of masters and boys, with hovering femininity encompassing them around and about. There is the real authentic note in this vivacious chronicle of schoolboy life, with its audacities, deceptions, jealously preserved code, and gimlet-eyed perception of what is done and what isn't. From study to pantry each group of characters is sketched with the incisiveness of etched portraiture, including denizens of the servants' hall, ruled by Mrs. Turvey, who was "a throw-back to pre-Renaissance times, with a sackcloth-and-ashes strain in her mutterings and vale-of-tears outlook: her intelligence has petered out, but her cooking remained."

The book is a record of wild and shiny and happy days, when plots were hatched, rough justice dispensed, and an occasional dream cherished in secret spiritual recess. Over all seems to blow a strong wind, clean, invigorating and gay—"Shelley's wind, deep and reverberating"—and a sense of spaciousness, the beauty beyond. "He looked up through the leaves, and his confidence was not in himself, but a shining certainty of the renaissance of life. Shedding his personality, he was part of life present and future, all lit with an eternal loveliness. . . . In that moment there was no time, and sin and death were irrelevant."

A very good story, with recurring patches of quite beautiful writing.

THE Arnold Bennet Omnibus Book will be sought after by those who like to have their authors under one cover, so to speak. It runs to over a thousand pages, includes "Accident,"

## Prize Poem Competition

THE prize of half a guinea in the current competition is awarded to K.M.N. for "Farewell, My Friend." The winning contribution falls into the category of love poetry, of which, for some obscure reason, our New Zealand writers appear somewhat shy. Two poems, commemorative of the Holy season, are commended. Both of these unfortunately arrived too late for consideration for the Christmas issue, as "copy" for that number had to be in earlier than usual. "The Star of Peace," by "Merrie," is arresting by reason of its devotional spirit and apt phraseology. "Noel," by M.F.P., is a very lovely poem, in which skill in verse form and another-world beauty are apparent.

R.M.B. (Riccarton): Your work shows certain facility, and is pleasant verse of the obvious variety. In reply to your query, we are afraid there is little reward, beyond honour and glory (and not much of that) for aspiring and accomplished poets of this Dominion.

"To Our Empire": An ambitious effort, unfortunately falling short of the height possible to scale with so gallant an inspiration.

"Marianne" sends a ditty about may and hay, dawn and lawn, fair and dare. Alas, those rhymes!

"White Monkey": Your work, with its touch of the macabre, has a touch of originality, but lacks poetic vision.

"Fair Play": We quite agree.

"Peace on Earth": We think Tennyson said something like it.

## Farewell, my friend

Not very far away is that dark hour  
When you will turn and go from me.  
Soon, ah very soon, my speeding feet,  
Unthinkingly and swift, will run to meet  
Your care-free call, and you will slowly bend  
And kiss my hands and say "Farewell, my friend."  
And there will be an end of love for me.  
Do you remember our first fleeting day?  
Why do I ask, who know you have forgot?  
We watched the fairy flecks of blue that shone  
Between the trees that gave their benison  
Of shade—the blue no deeper than your eyes.  
A lark was singing in that Paradise.  
Oh, I remember, though you have forgot!  
The parting hour will come; I cannot stay  
Its course, nor would I, for it has to be.  
It will be hard, so bitter hard to bear.  
And yet I will be brave, if God will bring  
To me the answering of one little prayer;  
That at the last, grave, sorrowing good-bye  
Dark mists will hide the blueness of the sky,  
And let there be not any birds to sing.  
O grant the gentle rain may veil your eyes.  
My friend, lest as you turn to go, you see  
The tears that would betray the heart of me.

—K.M.N.

"Elsie and the Child," "Riccyman Steps," and that great study of a modern politician, his domesticity and great amour, "Lord Raingo." All the

tales are in the brilliant author's most characteristic vein, and many will be glad to renew acquaintance with his inimitable creations.

ANOTHER "thriller" and a good one. "The Eye of Nemesis" is in Mrs. Philip Champion de Crespigny's best manner. Mr. Selwyn is murdered in his office, and no one knows who did it, but strong suspicion falls upon his private secretary, a nice young man, who obstinately refuses to disclose his doings on the fatal date. A nimble-witted girl, the young man's fiancée, takes a hand in the elucidation of the mystery, and with the help of an inspector in whom one thoroughly believes, and the film of a national pageant, light is thrown on dark doings and, as ever, all ends well.

MR. GERALD GOULD'S very delightful and amusing style is exemplified in "All About Women," a somewhat misleading title, as there is much diverse matter in this entertaining volume. Mr. Gould apparently knows all there is to be known concerning the enigma which once was known as the weaker sex, and sets down the fruits of his observation and intuition with a nice sense of the dignity and charm of his perennially interesting topic. But he also discourses on how to write fiction, and there are pen-and-ink portraits which are arrestingly true to type. His essays are discursive and catholic in scope, and to those who know how fascinating a companion Mr. Gould can be, the book does not need a recommendation.

IN "Puppets in Yorkshire," Mr. Walter Wilkinson records a tour of the broad country of the title with his puppet show. His book covers a wide scope, ranging, in humorous description and adventure, from Gainsborough over the Lincolnshire border, and by way of Marston Moor into the Pennine country and Wharfedale. With his puppet show he did good business, and sampled Yorkshire in the most comprehensive and original way. The story of his wanderings is set down for all and sundry to enjoy, and a delightful chronicle it is.

"THE World Against Mary" has been translated from the German of J. M. Frank by Dr. Otto Frommer. This novel caused a great deal of interest in Germany and on the Continent generally, and repays translation. It is the story, told with power and pathos, of a girl, essentially noble-minded, whom fate dedicates to sorrow and suffering. The tale is told with a dramatic inevitability, and it is felt that, given the circumstances, no other ending is possible. The gods decreed that it should be so, and Mary is the victim of their grim jest.