

THE GRAPHIC 3 SEPTEMBER 1904

NEW VERSE AND REPRINTS

Constant complaints are uttered by publishers and booksellers alike that nobody buys verse. But this seems to have no effect upon the amount of verse published, for a constant succession of little volumes by new writers, issues from the press. We are bound to say the quality of the contents too often justifies the public's refusal to buy. . . .

. . . Verses of this sort should remain unpublished or, better still, unwritten. But one of the heart-breaking things about the minor poet is the truly abject standard of technique with which he seems to be contented. Thus the Rev. John Cullen, whose volume, "Poems and Idylls," we see, is marked "Third Edition," writes thus:—

"Two saintly women I behold,
Who have had a peaceful war in hand,
For God and Home in every land,
Fair Temperance Standard they unfold."

That three editions of this kind of thing can possibly have been demanded speaks volumes for the devotion of Mr. Cullen's parishioners.

Mr. Walter Malone's "Poems" are even more deplorable:—

"No red deer's skin, no tawny lion's hide,
No woven fabric round his shoulders hung,
For young Narcissus roamed in beauty nude:
His soft round limbs, fair as a lily's bud,
Were never hidden in a useless garb.
The flush of boyhood still adorned his face,
A childish beauty budding into youth;
He scampered nimbly like a half-grown god."

Mr. Aleister Crowley's blank verse drama, "The Argonauts," is equally *banal* in workmanship and more pretentious. The task of reading it, however, is lightened by moments of unconscious humour, as when Pelias remarks [aside]:—

"Even so, beware!

Victory ill-nurtured breeds the babe defeat."

or when Argus opines—

"A fool allows a moment's irritation
To move the purpose of a thousand years."

Indeed, the scene in which Medea is persuading Pelias' children to chop their aged sire into convenient pieces and stew them in a cauldron, with a view to renewing his youth, reached a height of absurdity rarely found in serious drama.