

THE EQUINOX

No. III. will contain in its 400 pages :

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**This wonderful collection of Hymns to the Blessed Virgin Mary
is the work (so it is said) of a Leading London Actress.**

Father Kent writes in "The Tablet": "Among the many books which benevolent publishers are preparing as appropriate Christmas presents we notice many new editions of favourite poetic classics. But few, we fancy, can be more appropriate for the purpose than a little volume of original verses, entitled 'Amphora,' which Messrs. Burns and Oates are on the point of publishing. The following stanzas from a poem on the Nativity will surely be a better recommendation of the book than any words of critical appreciation:

"The Virgin lies at Bethlehem.
(Bring gold and frankincense and myrrh !)
The root of David shoots a stem.
(O Holy Spirit, shadow her !)

She lies alone amid the kine.
(Bring gold and frankincense and myrrh !)
The straw is fragrant as with wine.
(O Holy Spirit, shadow her !)"

Lieut.-Col. Gormley writes: "The hymns ordinarily used in churches for devotional purposes are no doubt excellent in their way, but it can scarcely be said, in the case of many of them, that they are of much literary merit, and some of them indeed are little above the familiar nursery rhymes of our childhood: it is therefore somewhat of a relief and a pleasure to read the volume of hymns to the Virgin Mary which has just been published by Messrs. Burns and Oates. These hymns to the Virgin Mary are in the best style, they are devotional in the highest degree, and to Roman Catholics, for whom devotion to the Virgin Mary forms so important a part of their religious belief, these poems should indeed be welcome; personally I have found them just what I desired, and I have no doubt other Catholics will be equally pleased with them."

"Vanity Fair" says: "To the ordinary mind passion has no relation to penitence, and carnal desire is the very antithesis of spiritual fervour. But close observers of human nature are accustomed to discover an intimate connection between the forces of the body and the soul; and the student of psychology is continually being reminded of the kinship between saint and sinner. Now and then we find the extremes of self and selflessness in the same soul. Dante tells us how the lover kissed the trembling mouth, and with the same thrill describes his own passionate abandonment before the mystic Rose. In our own day, the greatest of French lyric poets, Verlaine, has given us volumes of the most passionate love songs, and side by side with them a book of religious poetry more sublimely credulous and ecstatic than anything that has come down to us from the Ages of faith. We are all, as Sainte-Beuve said, 'children of a sensual literature,' and perhaps for that reason we should expect from our singers fervent religious hymns."

"There is one of London's favourites almost unrivalled to express by her art the delights of the body with a pagan simplicity and directness. Now she sends us a book, 'Amphora,' a volume of religious verse: it contains song after song in praise of Mary," etc. etc. etc.

The "Scotsman" says: "Outside the Latin Church conflicting views are held about the worship of the Virgin, but there can be no doubt that this motive of religion has given birth to many beautiful pieces of literature, and the poets have never tired of singing variations on the theme of 'Hail, Mary.' This little book is best described here as a collection of such variations. They are written with an engaging simplicity and fervour of feeling, and with a graceful, refined literary art that cannot but interest and attract many readers beyond the circles of such as must feel it religiously impossible not to admire them."

The "Daily Telegraph" says: "In this slight volume we have the utterances of a devout anonymous Roman Catholic singer, in a number of songs or hymns addressed to the Virgin Mary. The author, who has evidently a decided gift for sacred verse and has mastered varied metres suitable to her high themes, divides her poems into four series of thirteen each—thus providing a song for each week of the year. The songs are all of praise or prayer addressed to the Virgin, and, though many have a touch of mysticism, most have a simplicity of expression and earnestness of devotion that will commend them to the author's co-religionists."

The "Catholic Herald" says: "This anonymous volume of religious verse reaches a very high level of poetic imagery. It is a series of hymns in honour of Our Lady, invariably expressed in melodious verse. The pitfalls of religious verse are bathos and platitudes, but these the sincerity of the writer and a certain mastery over poetic expression have enabled him—or her—to avoid. The writer of such verse as the following may be complimented on a very high standard of poetic expression:

"The shadows fall about the way;
Strange faces glimmer in the gloom;
The soul clings feebly to the clay,
For that, the void; for this, the tomb !

"But Mary sheds a blessed light;
Her perfect face dispels the fears.
She charms Her melancholy knight
Up to the glad and gracious spheres."

"O Mary, like a pure perfume
Do thou receive this failing breath,
And with Thy starry lamp illumine
The darkling corridors of death !"

The "Catholic Times" says: "The 'Amphora' is a collection of poems in honour of our Blessed Lady. They are arranged in four books, each of which contains thirteen pieces. Thus with the prologue there are fifty-three poems in all. Needless to say they breathe a spirit of deep piety and filial love towards our Heavenly Mother. Many beautiful and touching thoughts are embodied in the various verses, which cannot but do good to the pious soul."

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"The Qabalistic information is very full, and there are tables of Egyptian and Hindu deities, as well as of colours, perfumes, plants, stones, and animals. The information concerning the tarot and geomancy exceeds that to be found in some treatises devoted exclusively to those subjects. The author appears to be acquainted with Chinese, Arabic, and other classic texts. Here your reviewer is unable to follow him, but his Hebrew does credit alike to him and to his printer. Among several hundred words, mostly proper names, we found and marked a few misprints, but subsequently discovered each one of them in a printed table of errata, which we had overlooked. When one remembers the misprints in 'Agrippa' and the fact that the ordinary Hebrew compositor and reader is no more fitted for this task than a boy cognisant of no more than the shapes of the Hebrew letters, one wonders how many proofs there were and what the printer's bill was. A knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet and of the Qabalistic Tree of Life is all that is needed to lay open to the reader the enormous mass of information contained in this book. The 'Alphabet of Mysticism,' as the author says—several alphabets we should prefer to say—is here. Much that has been jealously and foolishly kept secret in the past is here, but though our author has secured for his work the *imprimatur* of some body with the mysterious title of the A. . . A. . , and though he remains himself anonymous, he appears to be no mystery-monger. Obviously he is widely read, but he makes no pretence that he has secrets to reveal. On the contrary, he says, 'an indelible arcanum is an arcanum which *cannot* be revealed.' The writer of that sentence has learned at least one fact not to be learned from books.

"G. C. J."

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Saturday Review :

" He (Mr. Harris) is a born writer of fiction. . . . Those two books of his, 'Elder Conklin' and 'Montes, the Matador,' contained the best short stories that have been written. . . . Mr. Harris touches a high level of tragic intensity. And the scene of the actual throwing, and then the description of Schnaubelt's flight to New York in a state of mental and physical collapse, are marvels of tense narration. Altogether, the book is a thoroughly fine piece of work, worthy of the creator of Conklin. We hope it is the precursor of many other books from Mr. Harris."

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"You who hold more skill and more power than your great English predecessor, Robertus de Fluctibus, you have not feared to reveal 'the Arcana which are in the Adytum of God-nourished Silence' to those who, abandoning nothing, will sail in the company of the Brethren of the Rosy Cross towards the Limit, that outer, unknown world encircling so many a universe."

"John Bull," in the course of a long review by Mr. HERBERT VIVIAN

"The author is evidently that combination of genius, a humorist and a philosopher. For pages he will bewilder the mind with abstruse esoteric pronouncements, and then, all of a sudden, he will reduce his readers to earth with some surprisingly quaint conceit. I was unlucky to begin reading him at breakfast and I was moved to so much laughter that I nearly escaped a convulsion."

"The Times"

"The Light wherein he writes is the L.V.X. of that which, first mastering and then transcending the reason, illuminates the darkness caused by the interference of the opposite waves of thought. . . . It is one of the most suggestive definitions of KONX—the LVX of the Brethren of the Rosy Cross—that it transcends all the possible pairs of opposites. Nor does this sound nonsensical to those who are acquainted with that LVX. But to those who do not it must remain as obscure and ridiculous as spherical trigonometry to the inhabitants of Flatland."

"The Literary Guide"

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THE EQUINOX

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