

AMPHORA

Blue Cloth, Gold Design, 80 pp. Price 2s. 6d.

Published by BURNS & OATES, 28 Orchard St., W.

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 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."

A GREEN GARLAND

By V. B. NEUBURG

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