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## IN LIGHTER VEIN

### "Condensed Poems."

«CONDENSED POEMS» is the title of the latest volume from the pen of Miss Ruyter Little More. In it she has made, in some of her verses at least, so decided an advance in technic that, were we as surly as some critics, we should hint that she had either been helped by another, or had been attending some night-school of verse.

The idea of the work is distinctly original. It is—but let us quote from her preface:

#### TO MY FRIENDLY FRIENDS.

In this workaday world of ours, in which many of us pass our lives, a thorough familiarity with the best in poetical literature is not possible. It has occurred to me that if I played the part of a honey-bee, and flew from poem to poem of the world's favorites, extracting the honey, and then worked it over into a more condensed shape, my readers could store it away in the cells of their brains,—to use a witty simile which has just come to me,—and not be at the necessity of reading the originals.

I have endeavored as much as possible to bring the poems up to date, and thus give them a longer lease of life; and in not a few of them I have more clearly revealed the meaning, sometimes so obscure. This is notably the case in Mr. Longfellow's «Excelsior.» It may not have meant what it does to-day when he wrote it; they may have used straw to pack things then; but now it has come to mean «packing,» and why not make the fact plain?

My fame has gone abroad through the land, and, to put it quaintly, I hope that this little book will bring it back.

I will conclude with a verse (all mine own):

Go, little booklet, worm thy way  
Like woodchuck, mole, or rabbit,  
Till every heart shall feel thy sway,  
And you all homes inhabit.

R. L. M.

The poets that she has subjected to the condensing process number among them Milton, Shakspeare, Coleridge, Shelley, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Burns, Byron, Browning, Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, Emerson, Bryant, Whitman, and others less well known.

To boil down «Paradise Lost» to the dimensions of a quatrain is an achievement. We shall not quote it, as it might keep some one from reading the original.

She has done some of her best work in her paraphrases of Longfellow and Tennyson.

Our space will not allow us to quote more than two or three at present, although we may give the book another notice. This version of «Excelsior» has merits that scream for recognition:

#### EXCELSIOR.

FAST fell the shades of night.  
The Alps were very high.

A youth with banner bright  
Went shouting sadly by.  
He longed to go inside  
The homes along the road,  
But still, upheld by pride,  
Along he strode.  
The banner that he bore,  
It read «Excelsior.»

A drummer for the stuff  
In which we china pack,  
The youth he was. Enough.  
He walked and walked until, alack!  
A hound-dog found him where  
He'd fallen in the snow.  
His body still was there;  
His soul had had to go.  
And when they wondered what he came  
there for,  
The banner showed: «To sell «Excelsior.»»

Although this poem is only half as long as Longfellow's, yet much of his thought is left intact. It is not as musical, it seems to us, as is the verse of the Cambridge poet; but a busy man will not stop to think of that, and the utilitarian purpose in the youth's visit to Switzerland which Miss More has discovered would surely please Longfellow himself.

It is a pleasure to see «We Are Seven» packed into a triolet. Here it is:

#### «WE ARE SEVEN.»

SHE said, «Sir, we are seven»—  
A cottage girl I met;  
«The rest, they stop in heaven.»  
She said, «Sir, we are seven;  
And I am 'most eleven,  
And I am mama's pet.»  
She said, «Sir, we are seven»—  
A cottage girl I met.

Miss More's interpretation of the philosophy in Gray's «Elegy» is original, like everything that comes from her pen. She has written the «Elegy» in the form of irregular blank verse interspersed with «lyrics.» We have not room for the whole poem, but must content ourselves with one song from it—«Full Many a Gem»:

FULL many a gem that 's A No. 1,  
Fit for a diadem flashed i' the sun,  
Lies in the sea.  
There let it be!

And many a flower, pretty and neat,  
After a shower smelling so sweet,  
Never is seen  
By a human being.

This is delicious.

In the following version of «Abou Ben Adhem» I have tried to bring out its humor more strongly than Leigh Hunt was able to.—R. L. M.