

REVIEWS

Innocents at Chantilly with the final painting must immediately admit that his method involved not the geometrical filling of a given space, but the reduction of a design from human to pictorial terms. With her tabulated principles of composition Miss Richter refuses to recognise that on the introduction of an incommensurable element, colour, into a two-dimensional work of art mathematical distances can count for nothing. Where, however, there is definitely an architectural element in the composition, as in the thrones of the Fra Bartolommeo *Virgin and Saints* (Louvre) or the Bellini *Madonna* (Frari, Venice), which she illustrates, or where the painting itself fulfils an architectural function, as in the Raphael and Masaccio frescoes discussed, it is natural that the proportions should be to some extent dictated by architectural considerations. But to expect Hogarth and Fragonard to observe the limitations imposed on the quattrocento church decorator is surely a little unreasonable.

Neither can we altogether accept the peculiar sense in which the word 'rhythmic' is used throughout the book. The mathematical symmetry advocated by Miss Richter is inherently static and therefore to qualify it with adjectives like 'rhythmic' or Mr. Hambidge's 'dynamic' tends to confuse the issue. From a statement on page 3 it appears that Miss Richter considers time and rhythm synonymous, a purely classical conception quite inapplicable to the Baroque work included in her discussion. Rhythm in painting is no more exclusively dependant on the mathematical division of space than rhythm in music on the mathematical division of time.

Nevertheless, criticism of the latter part of Miss Richter's book should not obscure the breadth of application of her conclusions on classical art and their very great value. These conclusions deserve dispassionate study, if only because they provide those to whom the Elgin Marbles are a *bête noire* with a valid reason for their being so. As Monet put it, 'On ne fait pas des tableaux avec des doctrines.'

J.P.-H.

NEW LOVE-POEMS BY SIR WALTER SCOTT. Edited by Davidson Cook, F.S.A. Scot. (Basil Blackwell; 5/-.)

In working for Professor Grierson at the Victoria and Albert Museum Mr. Davidson Cook made the curious and lucky discovery of a manuscript telling of Scott's first love affair with a girl called 'Jessie.' She was of humble degree, and young 'Wattie,' rising seventeen, met her while staying there with his uncle, Robert Scott. The letters in this book are really more interesting than the love-poems. In one he says, after alluding

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to her unhappy home life, that he has 'no little experience of similar wretchedness'; in another he tells of an epic poem 'hundreds and hundreds of lines' long, a 'chronicle in verse of the doings of knights'; in yet another we learn for the first time of horrifying ballads heard at Bath at the age of five.

After many lovers' meetings at Kelso, 'Jessie' came to Edinburgh to nurse an invalid aunt, and during clandestine visits 'Wattie' allowed himself to be locked up in a cupboard full of crockery and food, where he whiled away the time writing verses after this kind:

Here's haddocks dry and barley meal,
And marmalade and jam,
And high, suspended by a hook,
Above me hangs a ham.
Come hither, you my closet are,
Where all my sweets are stored;
Oh, save me from your aunt's good things,
And some of yours afford.

This little volume is an amusing and surprisingly valuable addition to Scottiana, and makes some of the solemn theories as to Scott's literary development appear rather ridiculous.

U.P.-H.

THE PARADISO OF DANTE ALIGHIERI. With a translation into English triple rhyme and a brief Introduction. By Geoffrey L. Bickersteth. (Cambridge University Press; 10/6.)

Mr. Bickersteth, through his translation, has raised in this country another worthy monument to the memory of Dante. He will rank among the distinguished scholars, who have studied and interpreted the Divine Comedy.

His introduction is interesting; his translation careful and fluent. He is aware of the difficulties of rendering the 'terza rima' into English—the translator may well despair of reproducing even the echo of the echo of such loveliness.' Yet, in the great lyrical passages Mr. Bickersteth is at his best.

When Dante wrote, his medium was still plastic, and often a single word is charged with a chapter of meaning. The context and our measure of discerning alone can give a value to his words. Yet it is difficult at times to find the literal meaning, more difficult still to appreciate the spirit, which inspired the verse. If Mr. Bickersteth sometimes falls short, it is that he does not always adequately express the feeling of tension, which quickened the sensitive mind of the poet and stretched it taut, like the chord of some delicate instrument, so that it vibrated to so high a melody.

H.H.