

The illuminations fall naturally into two periods. The style most admired at St. Swithin's, Winchester, between 1140 and 1165 was a new amalgam of elements long current in the North. There seem clear links with the pre-conquest school at Winchester, the standards of taste if not "English" are at least markedly Anglo-Norman. But from 1165 the work seems more international; it seems to follow an English dialect in international art forms, but it is no longer part of an age old and sophisticated vernacular. For the change in art forms happens to coincide with the change in culture as Anglo-Norman England develops in the new world of the Angevin empire. The Angevin contacts to the South and East bring with them fresh influences from 12th century Constantinople, passing North-West through the Angevin links with the Court at Palermo and perhaps through a direct traffic in textiles. And then a generation later something of the new Gothic spirit of the Ile de France comes down to Winchester, perhaps through Westminster. It could be maintained that no book published in the last 15 years has conveyed so perfectly the changes in 12th century English history.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

RIME, GENTLEMEN, PLEASE. By Robert Farren. (Sheed & Ward; 5s.).
SELECTED POEMS. By George Every, J. D. C. Pellow and S. L. Bethell. (Staples Press; 6s.).

Robert Farren is an Irish Catholic poet. His first two volumes, *Thronging Feet* and *Time's Wall Asunder*, showed him to belong to the Gaelic tradition of such bards as Aonghus O Dálaigh and Mac-Aingil. In his third work, *The First Exile*, he re-told the story of Saint Colmcille, and, in a sequence of over seventy poems, proved himself master of a multitude of different verse-forms. In this respect, his virtuosity is similar to that of the contemporary Welsh poet, Vernon Watkins. Now in his latest collection, *Rime, Gentlemen, Please*, he presents a new facet of himself: that of satirist and lampoonist. And here, like Yeats, his ambition has run too far ahead of his potentiality: good poets are seldom lampoonists and good lampoonists seldom poets, for satire, if it is to be trenchant, is best confined to the short clipped jingle, and not to lines as unwieldily as

I hear, entranced, my neighbour's scale-descending
snore like a car-exhaust groan down the street.

The clumsiness of the image only helps to recall Louis MacNeice's better treatment of a similar theme in *Sunday Morning*. Yet, despite this apparent weakness, there is much compensation to be found in Farren's poems, *The Dancer* and on the *Death of a Sculptor*. There is a particular precision about them which not only emphasises their craftsmanship, but also increases their lyrical effect upon the reader. He is a man to whom poetry comes "like a redwing hopping the hedge for haws." Anything attracts him: a water-colour morning, a shrub like a flag-box, men climbing the Matterhorn, cloud-aluminium or yellow-taloned thunder. He is

one of the few poets about whom one feels an increasing curiosity.

The three poets, George Every, J. D. C. Pellow and S. L. Bethell, who share together a volume of their selected work, belong to an earlier generation than Farren. Previously their work has appeared in such journals as *The New English Weekly* and *Criterion*, and in the Pelican *Anthology of Religious Verse*. Their poetry is straightforward and mature. They carefully avoid surprising adjectives, para-rhymes and surrealist imagery; instead they follow behind Eliot—even to the point when their work merely becomes a parody. Admittedly, parody properly understood is no gamin impudence, but when it is executed without wit, and presented as serious poetry, the result if it is not pathetic, is nearly always dull. The present volume makes no exception. NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE.

THE LOVE STORY OF THOMAS DAVIS: told in the Letters of Annie Hutton, edited with an Introduction by Joseph Hone. (Cuala Press; Limited Edition; 12s. 6d.).

Seen through his own verse—*The Boatman of Kinsale*, for instance—one would have imagined Thomas Davis, Irish patriot and poet, a gallant wooer and a tender husband. Wooer he was; but only for one month affianced. Husband he never became; for he died of fever a month after his engagement to Annie Hutton, whose six ardent and maidenly letters to her betrothed have been published to mark the centenary of his death: A seventh letter to her lover's sister, Charlotte, six months after the tragedy shows the girl's spiritual and intellectual resourcefulness in her bereavement. She died eight years later.

It is exhilarating to find the Cuala Press enshrining this souvenir of heroic days in the best that the Eire of Davis's costly aspirations has to give; Caslon type, exquisite homemade paper, and a cover of Irish linen and vellum-covered cloth. HELEN PARRY EDEN.

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