

A Treasury of
New Zealand Verse

*Being a New Edition of
"New Zealand Verse"*

BY

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CXLII.

Art and Beauty.

I SAW as in a dream a palace high,
With deep-domed roof on massive columns set,
Wherein were forms, the loveliest Art had yet
Conceived, which none could over-magnify.
The dome was as a star-bespangled sky,
The columns richly chased; and there was met
In every niche a lovely statuette,
And all around Art's glories charmed the eye;

And while I gazed, and thought that here I saw
Man's fairest dreams preserved beyond decay
The palace fell; and I was filled with awe.
Then lo! there broke the splendours of the day,
And all things seemed to say in earth and sky,
"Though Art be mortal, Beauty cannot die."

Henry Allison.

CXLIII.

The Devotee of Art.

ASK me not why I work with so much zeal
To form the thing that seems to me so fair,
When over all, in spite of every care,
The lines of slow decay will surely steal.
I work because I must, because I feel
The sway of Art, its inspiration rare,
Which leadeth by a broad and lofty stair
To where Truth doth to me herself reveal
In regal splendour. This I strive to show
That all who see may render homage due.
For, though my work shall fade, yet well I know,
If men her beauty see, it shall not die:
In every age they will her face renew,
And keep her radiant glories ever nigh.

Henry Allison.

Quot Oculi Tot Mundi.

THE world is as the sense that makes it known :
 To eyeless creatures, dark eternally ;
 To others, dim, in mazy depths of sea,
 Beyond the sound of all its surface moan ;
 Narrow to some, as insects 'neath a stone,
 Or in a tiny crevice, or a bee
 That murmurs in a flower ; but the free,
 Heav'n-soaring birds a wider vision own.

And though our eyes can boast no eagle sweep,
 To us is given the larger range of thought,
 Wherewith we pierce the starry depths, o'erleap
 The bounds of sense, and see in all things wrought
 Signs of deep mysteries, which angel eyes
 May see, or ours, perchance, in paradise.

Henry Allison.

Mutability.

HERE all is change, and life a deep unrest ;
 So say the waves that break upon the shore,
 The shifting sands that drift for evermore,
 The ever-moving crowd that seem possessed
 Of souls unquiet as the waves, but blest
 With heedlessness of all that lies before,
 For none may know what changes are in store ;
 We can but dream them on soft nature's breast.

Yet, 'neath the waves there dwells eternal calm :
 Delve deep the sand, and to the rock it brings :
 The inconstant crowd is voiceful of the soul,
 Which liveth always, an unfading palm,
 Drawing its life from deep, divinest springs
 That shall not fail while stars and systems roll.

Henry Allison.

The Deepest Yearning.

OUR life is more than meat. Deep in the Soul
 Springs Godlike, Godward yearning ; ay, and we,
 Though earth-drawn, ever would rise, unstained and
 free,
 Above the clouds of sense that hide our goal.
 This wondrous frame of things is as a scroll
 Of mystic import, teaching us to see,
 Though vaguely, and through shrouds of mystery,
 The working of that power which moves the Whole.
 Not Science fair, though sought with purpose true,
 Nor Art, that all her wealth upon us spends,
 Can fill the soul. She can her strength renew
 Only with bread that from on high descends.
 She yearns for That to which all things are due—
 The Centre deep to which all Being tends.

Henry Allison.