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The Secret Hill by Ruth Duffin; Celia Duffin

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REVIEWS

THE SECRET HILL. Poems by Ruth and Celia Duffin. Maunsel.

Boards, 1s. net.

This little book contains some of the stuff of literature. The best of the poems of both authors show a simple directness that adds to their quiet power of expression. The weakest show nothing worse than the too great domination of a technical form occasionally unsuited to the motive, occasionally reminiscent of other singers. Amongst Miss Ruth Duffin's work may be noted "Vita Brevis," a singularly successful "Elizabethan experiment; the fine sonnet, "When we are old," and the "Prophecy of Cathbad the Druid," which has a classic grace:

"Deirdre, O King, shall be
A flame of beauty in the wastes of time,
Lovely and perilous. For her shall fall
Great heroes and bright candles of the Gael;
Her eyes shall lead them over alien seas,
Her voice entreat them down the ways of death.
And at the last, O King, a lonely grave
Shall be her share— a little grave apart
Hide her sad beauty from the eyes of men;
Above her passionate heart the swinging tide
Shall fret the salt sea-sand, and o'er her rest
Wild winds of ocean raise the funeral keen.

Some of Miss Ceila Duffin's pieces are chiefly characterised by their deep sincerity expressed in a kind of impassioned calm, pieces such as "After Death," "After the Squall," "Fear me no more." Three stanzas from the latter will show something of their quality:

"Yes, you may take me by the hand once more,
And with a strength they dared not feel before,
My hands unfold.
No longer they imperious to command,
They cannot know the pressure of your hand,—
They are too cold.

Yes, you may look deep down into mine eyes,
And gazing, seek the love that never dies
So long you will,
They will not blame you now, nor fill with tears,
Nor flash with passions deep, nor foolish fears,—
They are too still.

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Yes, you may kiss me on the lips, so long
As you find comfort there, they were so strong,
 They could not fail.
They will not flinch to find your lips so near,
They will not flush to know themselves so dear,--
 They are too pale.

EOLSYNÉ AND OTHER POEMS. By H. Bindon Burton.
Maunsel: Pott 8vo, cloth gilt, 5s. net.

The ingenuousness of this volume will hardly compensate for its entire lack of literary value. The title is a misdescription; there are no poems discoverable between the covers, nothing but the sheerest doggerel. Did the author not appear to be satisfied that his work was worthy of preservation, the kindest thing would be to pass it over in silence; as it is, we spare him the cruelty of citation.