

# Poetry

Well-Educated Mother's Heart Learning Library

Libraries Of Hope

# *Poetry*

Compiled by
Marlene Peterson

**Well-Educated Mother's Heart Learning Library**
**Libraries of Hope**

Poetry

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Compiled from:
On the Teaching of Poetry, by Alexander Haddow, London: Blackie & Son Limited, (1925). In the public domain.

The Way of Poetry, by John Drinkwater, London: Collins' Clear-Type Press, (1922).

My Book of Stories from the Poets, by Christine Chaundler, London: Cassell and Company, LTD, (1920).

The Gentle Reader, by Samuel McChord Crothers, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, (1904).

Prose and Poetry for Children, by Henry Meade Bland, Press of Eaton & Company, (1912).

The Art of Writing and Speaking the English Language, by Sherwin Cody, Funk & Wagnalls Company (1905).

The Poet's Corner, by Alice Corkran, E.P. Dutton & Company, (1892).

Libraries of Hope, Inc.
Appomattox, Virginia 24522

Website www.librariesofhope.com
Email: librariesofhope@gmail.com

Printed in the United States of America

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# Gems of Thought Poetry

## Newell Dwight Hillis – The Immortal Hope

Among the earth's wisest teachers, we give the first place to the poets. These are the men of vision, who see the open right in the sky; who hear and understand the voices that fall over the heavenly battlements. And who, when the clouds stand upon the horizon, pierce through the darkness, and show us the sweet fields that lie beyond.

In all ages, the poet has been the true consoler and guide, and teacher. He is not simply the interpreter of the beautiful, he is also the prophet of the eternal, and the herald of an invisible friend. It is given to the soldier to protect the people, the teacher instructs the state, the statesman guides the state. But the poet inspires us, stays our faith, and gives the clue out of the maze. What the philosopher cannot do, the poet, with his song and parable, has easily accomplished. The word owes much to Moses for his laws, but not less for his psalm of the brevity of life, the eternity of God, and the certainty of the realm that lies just beyond the stars.

**Hamilton Wright Mabie – Golden Hours With the Poets**

Dr. Grenfell tells us that when in his perilous adventure in Easter week, 1908, he lay down on the ice-pan, floating out into the polar sea to almost certain death but feeling that he must sleep in order to gain power to resist cold and weariness, the lines of a hymn he had learned in childhood came back to him and renewed his courage. Nothing remains longer in the memory than simple poems learned in childhood; a fact the full meaning of which we have not yet learned; or, if we have learned it, we have failed to make use of it.

Here is evidently one of those suggestions from the nature of the child which throw clear light on the soundest methods of education. For the substance of education is not a body of facts but of truth; not agility of mind, but richness of mind; not a knowledge of the physical aspects of the world only, but a sense of its wonderful beauty and variety. To get information and to train the brain and the senses so that they can be used with the highest skill are important parts of education; but it is more important to bring out the personality of a child, to put him in such companionship with the world that he finds rest and joy and inspiration in Nature, and vital growth through experience…

[The] wonderful truths that are behind facts and give facts their meaning is the special service of poetry to express. For poetry is not simply a musical combination of words put together by a man whose ear knows the melody in them; ... it presents the deepest and most vital truths in the most beautiful and lasting forms. It is not an unreal thing; it is the very soul of reality. It does not conflict with the fact; it is the soul of the fact.

No one knew better than Wordsworth what poetry is, for he gave his whole life to the study and practice of it; and, while he was often a maker of verse when he meant to be a maker of poetry, he was also at his best a poet whose depth of thought and feeling was matched with a childlike simplicity of nature. The man who wrote "Daffodils," which was born in the joy and freedom of the dancing flowers, and who likewise wrote so many other poems that bring us fact to fact with Nature, said of poetry that it is the impassioned expression in the countenance of all science. Science gives us the face of the world, but poetry gives us its countenance; for the face is the group of features, but the countenance is the expression on its features, the face after the soul has molded and shaped it. And it is the countenance for which the child is always searching.

Poetry tells the greatest truths about Nature and life in the most adequate and beautiful way; and in the way which is most easily remembered. Meters were originally, to a very large extent, helps to memory. The earliest literature was largely in verse form. There was no printing-press; the singers, reciters, balladists spoke to the ear, not to the eye; and if a story or song was to be remembered it must be put in the most portable form. Our earliest ancestors, in the childhood of the race, saw the world with the imagination much more than do we who see it largely from the scientific standpoint, and in some important ways they felt the wonder and mystery of it more quickly and keenly than we...

At a certain period poetry is the normal food of children. It is more: it gives them standards of taste which will keep them in the future from cheap and vulgar things. To the heart which has been educated by hearing the music of Beethoven, Brahms, and Chopin the catching vulgarities of the vaudeville are intolerable. It is every child's right to go out of his home armed against the appeal of inferior and cheap things in character and art.

No mother can follow her son into the world and stand beside him in all the crises of his experience, choose his companions, and select the language he shall hear, the books he shall read, the

ideas of life that shall be presented to him. If she could do those things the boy would never be a man. She can, however, temper his nature, give him standards of excellence and ideals of actions which will, in the long run, keep him from the contamination of cheap and mean things.

And one of the best ways of giving him a feeling for true and beautiful things in art and life is to give him the right kind of poetry as a child. It is a great advantage to a boy or girl to begin the later years of youth with a capital of the best poetry in the memory, and it is a very easy matter to put it there if the right moment is seized. Those who were fortunate enough to hear stories or poems read or told in that wonderful hour just before bedtime when the world turns magical and mysterious, have never forgotten the verses learned or the tales that made homes in the memory under the spell of the gathering darkness. It is as easy at that time to teach a child "My Heart Leaps Up, "Daffodils," or "Robert of Lincoln," as some jingle of words popular at the moment and forgotten a year later. The volume of poetry ought always to lie on a table, to be used as part of the family life, to be taught from as a text-book, to be read as a story-book.

If [that volume of poetry] makes it possible to put in the minds of childhood examples of the best poetry; if it gives language of the experience and

emotions which are universal; if it confirms high aims and strengthen s honorable ambitions; if it interprets life nobly and brings into lonely homes the thoughts that have stirred the world; it if touches hard conditions and arduous work with the light of imagination, it will fulfil the purpose for which it has been selected and justify its claim to be a Treasury of beauty and joy and strength in the home.

**Mary Burt – Poems Every Child Should Know**

There are people who believe that in the matter of learning poetry there is no "ought," but this is a false belief. There is a duty, even there; for every American citizen ought to know the great national songs that keep alive the spirit of patriotism. Children should build for their future—and get, while they are children, what only the fresh imagination of the child can assimilate.

They should stores up an untold wealth of heroic sentiment; they should acquire the habit of carrying a literary quality in their conversation; they should carry a heart full of the fresh and delightful associations and memories connected with poetry hours to brighten mature years. They should develop their memories while they have memories to

develop… And Memory, the Goddess Beautiful, will henceforth go with you to recall this happy hour.

### Sara Teasdale – Rainbow Gold

We who have seen how poetry has come to our rescue with its delight, its healing, and its new courage in times of stress and sorrow, know that it is an inestimable possession. We cannot come to the knowledge of it too early. If we can have a clear personal realization while we are children, that we love poetry, no amount of well-meaning but sometimes tactless and uninspired teaching of it in schools and colleges can shake us in the knowledge of that love…. Teachers and parents alike have come to feel that the love of poetry in general is more to be desired for children than the knowledge of certain "well known" poems, no matter how good, or even how great, these poems may be.

### Kate Douglas Wiggin – Golden Numbers

"The procession of beautiful sounds that is a poem," says Walter Raleigh. It is quite natural to love the music of verse before you catch the deeper thought, and you feel, in some of the greatest poetry, as if only the angels could have put the melodious

words together. There is more in this music than meets the eye or ear; it is what differentiates prose from poetry, which to quote Wordsworth, is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge. Prose it is said can never be too truthful or too wise, but some is more than mere Truth and Wisdom, it is the "rose upon Truth's lips, the light in Wisdom's eyes." That is why the thought in it finds its way to the very heart of one and makes one glow and tremble, fills one with desire to do some splendid action, right some wrong, be something other than one is, more noble, more true, more patient, more courageous.

[G]rowth, in mind and spirit, as in body, is largely a matter of will. It is all ours, the beauty in the world; your task is merely to enter into possession. Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare are yours as much as another's. The great treasury of inspiring thoughts that has been heaped together as the ages went by, the "rich deposit of the centuries," is your heritage; if you wish to assert your heirship no one can say you nay; if you will to be a Croesus in the things of the mind and spirit, no one can ever keep you poor.

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I once said to a dear old minister who was preaching to a very ignorant and unlearned congregation, "It must be very difficult, sir, for you to

preach down to them"; for he was a man of rare scholarship and true wisdom; —"I try to be very simple a part of the time," he answered, "but not always; about once a month I fling the fodder so high in the rack that no man can catch at a single straw without stretching his neck!"

Now pray do not laugh at that illustration; smile if you will, but it serves the purpose. Just as we develop our muscles by exercising our bodies, so do we grow strong mentally and spiritually by this "stretching" process. You are not obliged to love an impersonal, remote, or complex poem intimately and passionately, but read it faithfully if you do not wish to be wholly blind and deaf to beauties of sense or sound that happier people see and hear. Joubert says most truly: "You will find poetry nowhere unless you bring some joy with you," but there are some splendid things in verse as in prose that you stand in too great awe of to love in any real, childlike way.

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[This} is what poetry is always doing for us: revealing, translating thoughts we are capable of feeling, but not expressing.

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Young people do not think or talk very much about style, but they come under its spell

unconsciously and respond to its influence quickly enough. To give a sort of definition: style is a way of saying or writing a thing so that people are compelled to listen. When you grow sensitive to beauty of language you become, in some small degree at least, capable of using it yourself. You could not, for instance, read daily these "honey-tongued" poets without gathering a little sweetness for your own unruly member.

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There are certain spiritual lessons to be gained from many of the immortal poems, lessons which the oldest as well as the youngest might well learn. Turn to Milton's Ode on his Blindness. It is not easy reading, but you will begin to care for it when experience brings you the meaning of the line, "They also serve who only stand and wait." It is one of a class of poems that have been living forces from age to age; that have quickened aspiration, aroused energy, deepened conviction; that have infused a nobler ardor and loftier purpose into life wherever and whenever they were read.

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By and by you will add poem after poem to your list of favorites, and so gradually, you will make your own volume of Golden Numbers, which will be

far better than any book we can fashion for you. Perhaps you will copy single verses and whole poems in it and, later, learn them by heart. Such treasures of memory "will henceforth no longer be forgettable, detachable parts of your mind's furniture, but well-springs of instinct forever."

**Henry Bland – Prose and Poetry for Children**

The intense power of symbolism lies in its power of suggestiveness. The mind grasps the clue to thought and from the clue develops the thought much more quickly than from the most direct presentation of the idea. Symbolism presents the glimmer leaving the mind to catch at the suggestion. ... It is fundamental that...the hidden is a strong lure to the intellect. It ensnares the imagination and holds the fancy. More than that, it leads us to take our own peculiar personal attitude to those scenes and emotion. ... If the symbolic shows this strong appeal to the adult imagination, it is doubly attractive to the child—especially at the age when fancy is most active. Thus nature poetry in which the forces of nature are personified, or imagined to be other than what they are, has a natural place in the child's education.

## Emilie Kip Baker – The Children's First Book of Poetry

How should an anthology be used? One is tempted to answer flippantly: with good taste and good sense. Certainly it is not to be read straight through. ... One doesn't read poetry so; one takes it in bits, intersperses it between other reading, returns to it again and again, dips in here and there, reads his favorites often, "proves everything," and "holds fast to that which is good" for him. One tries to understand as well as to enjoy; but he doesn't always make the attack with the persistent analysis that he brings to his mathematics. One wants his poetry in brief, to be something from which he can gain new ideas, new outlooks, while feeding his soul with pleasant emotions. It is not poetry for us, it if is arid.

## Andrew Lang – The Blue Poetry Book

Childhood is the age when a love of poetry may be born and strengthened – a taste which grows rarer and more rare in our age, when examinations spring up and choke the good seed. By way of lending no aid to what is called Education, very few notes have been added. The child does not want everything to be explained; in the unexplained is great pleasure. Nothing, perhaps, crushes the love of poetry more

surely and swiftly than the use of poems as schoolbooks. They are at once associated in the mind with lessons, with long, with endless hours in school, with puzzling questions and the agony of an imperfect memory, with grammar and etymology, and everything that is the enemy of joy. We may cause children to hate Shakespeare or Spenser as Byron hated Horace, by inflicting poets on them, not for their poetry, but for the valuable information in the notes.

# ON THE TEACHING OF POETRY

BY

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# INTRODUCTION

This book is intended for students in training, or for young teachers of English in any department of the school who have not yet found their feet. In the variety of the work which is suddenly thrust upon them when they enter the schools, their greatest difficulty is to find a path through the work, and see the ideal to which it leads. How often young teachers are worried with the question: "Is this the right way?" When they know, or think they know, the method to follow, the rest is easy. *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte.* Believing as I do that nothing is so important as to set out in the right direction—that once they have their foot on the right road the future is their own—I have attempted to set up an ideal in the teaching of poetry, and to indicate lines of approach.

I have chosen this subject because, if I have anything to say worth saying on the method of teaching English, it is on this department of the work, and if I fail here I need go no further. In it I have spent many of the happiest hours of my life, and hope to

spend many more. I think, at times, of Shaw's epigram: "Those who can, do: those who cannot, teach." If we could write poetry no doubt we would do so, and leave the teaching to others. If we only love poetry, but cannot write it, then we teach. Yes, but teaching is also doing, and it is because I have felt that in teaching poetry I was, in the fullest sense, doing, that I have found it so satisfying. "Life's inadequate to joy, as the soul sees joy," says Cleon. Teach a poem, as it should be taught, and see the flash in your pupils' eyes as the living beauty of the poem goes home to their hearts, and you will find that life is adequate to joy. Certainly, at the end of a lesson on poetry, Shaw's epigram has seemed to me merely a clever futility. He never knew the teacher's joy in doing.

But there is another reason for beginning with poetry. If I had to test a teacher of English by his work in any one branch of the subject I would choose this. It is the highest work he has to do, that which demands most of him. If he can teach poetry he can teach any other department of the subject if he will; but he may teach other departments of the subject well and fail with poetry.

We hear frequently the complaint that modern education seems to lead nowhere, that much of the money spent upon it is simply wasted. The taxpayer looks for a fair return for his money, and, when he fails to find it, condemns education as not being sufficiently practical. This opens up a big question which

I do not mean to tackle. But I wish to state that I aim at treating my subject in an entirely practical way. It seems to me that poetry ought to be taught in a practical manner, that so taught it will give the taxpayer an abundant return for his money, and that many of the methods used at present amply justify the complaints that are made. In saying this I know I am inviting criticism. As I have to deal with students entering the teaching profession, criticism will be most helpful. If my methods are wrong, the sooner I am told the better, for the methods suggested in this little book are those I strive to impress on the young teachers under my charge.

When I think of what I have written, I imagine two different classes of critics rising up against me—those who consider me a mere theorist, and those who object to my strictures on teachers. The former wish to know what practical experience, if any, I have, that I, a lecturer in a Training College, presume to speak. To these I offer the following summary of my practical experience: I was for four years a Pupil Teacher, and for five years an Elementary Teacher; I spent eight months teaching in a French High School, eight and a half years as Head of the English Department in a Secondary School, and nine and a half years as Headmaster of a combined School containing firstly, Higher Grade and Elementary Departments and, latterly, Higher Grade and Advanced Division.

The latter, on the other hand, urge that I have been too severe upon teachers, too ready to condemn. To

this I can but reply that the person who is most often in the dock is my past self, and that if I seem to condemn with confidence, it is because I feel confident that I know now where and why I failed in the past. I have written here what I imagine would have been useful to myself as a beginner, in the hope that it may help some other beginner.

# ON THE TEACHING OF POETRY

## CHAPTER I

## THE PRACTICAL IN TEACHING

When we think of education and of much of the criticism passed upon it, we find that many of the faults in both spring from the same cause. We find teachers with no clear idea as to what they should aim at, employing methods for which they can give no real defence. Their work might be summed up in Pope's couplet:

> " And he, who now to sense, now nonsense leaning,
> Means not, but blunders round about a meaning."

On the other hand we find critics with very definite ideas as to what they want from education, criticizing teachers and their product. Unfortunately the critics are often as far wrong as the teachers. They do not see that what they expect from the teacher is often

quite different from what the teacher has been asked to do. The teachers fail because they do not see clearly what they ought to aim at, and the critics fail because they do not see what the teachers ought to aim at. If the teachers do not know where they ought to be going, how can they ever arrive? And what are we to say of those who do not know where the teachers ought to be going, but criticize them for not arriving somewhere else? We are called a practical people, and so we blunder along.

It seems reasonable to ask that teachers should see clearly the reason for which a subject is included in the curriculum—the end to be attained—and should shape their teaching towards that end. They cannot begin to be practical until they know what is asked of them, in what way the subject is to advance the child's education. But if the end is an ideal and so unattainable, what then? All ends worth attaining are unattainable. The best part of humanity spend their lives striving for ideals which they know they will never attain. The man who has attained has not lived.

> " Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
> Or what 's a Heaven for?"

And so the teacher, to be practical, must strive by all the means in his power to attain the ideal. His success is to be measured—but who can measure it?—not by the nearness to the ideal which he attains, but by the height he lifts his pupils above the level on which they stood. I wish, then, to make this the test

for all methods; do they help towards that end for which the subject is made part of the child's education? If so, they are practical.

Why is poetry taught in school? Poetry is an art, and the reason for including it in the curriculum can only be that we wish to develop the æsthetic sense, the feeling for beauty in our pupils. It is true that poetry does more than this; but not only is the desire to develop this love of the beautiful the main reason for teaching it in school, but if poetry is to do more for us, it will do so only in proportion as we feel its beauty. Poetry is not only beautiful; it is also true to life. In it " Beauty is truth ", and in it, as in all art, we attain to truth through beauty. If we could develop this sense in our pupils so that when they left us they would turn, naturally, towards the beautiful in all things in sound and sight, in thought and deed we should have attained one of the great ends of education and our pupils would remake this world of ours, for no people with a sense for the beautiful would tolerate the hideous sights and sounds and slums of our great cities. Our social reformers may strive as they will to lift the people, but they are the first to admit that though much may be done by improving external conditions, the only cure is to educate the people—to develop in them a love for better things. We cannot make a people clean in body, clean in thought and deed. But if we can develop in the people a desire for this, they will no longer tolerate filth. One of the practical methods of improving human life is to

develop the children's powers of appreciation of the beautiful. Poetry is one of a group of subjects that aim at this ideal, this development of the æsthetic sense, this joy in beauty. All teaching of poetry, to be practical, must foster this love of the beautiful.

## CHAPTER II

## QUALIFICATIONS OF THE TEACHER OF POETRY

It will be evident that the first qualification for the teacher of poetry is that he should love poetry—love the poetry he teaches. The teacher can communicate only what he feels. If the poem is dead to him, he cannot make it live to his pupils. It is true that some of his pupils, with a natural gift for poetry, may get home to the beauty of the poem in spite of his teaching. But to the normal pupil he will communicate his own feeling that the poem is a dead thing.

It may be argued that some people have no ear for poetry. That is quite true. Some people have no ear for music, and so they are not asked to teach music. But if they have an ear for music it can be trained. Just so in poetry. The man to whom poetry is dead should not be asked to do what he cannot do. But there are few such people. The great majority of people have some power of appreciating poetry when it is read to them by one who feels it. The teacher's duty is to develop this power. He must give up the idea that the passing of any examination qualifies him to teach

a subject. The subject must live in him if he is to teach it, and it must go on living in him if he is to continue teaching it.[1] What are we to say of the teacher who makes of the poem an intelligence lesson, or who spends his time over historical, geographical and biographical details, over classical allusions, derivations and figures of speech, so that the pupils get everything except the poetry? Simply, that the poem does not live for him. It is dead to him, evidently, for his only interest lies in dissecting it. If it lived for him the details would live also and find their true place in his work.

That the subject may continue living he must continue reading. When he lets his own reading drop, thinking he knows enough for his work, and trusting to his accumulated stores, he not only ceases to advance —he begins to go back. There can be no standing still. Life means development and change. Rest is the beginning of death and decay. True, he may know enough for all he has to teach. It is not knowledge we are asking for, but the fire of life, that freshness, that zest for the work which can be found only in him in whom the subject lives. Is it much to ask? That depends on how he regards his work. The curse of our profession is that it forms an easy option for the slackers—those who will not work anywhere, but who

[1] "But," I may be asked, "how do you expect a teacher to keep living all the subjects in the Elementary curriculum?" I do not expect him to do so. I doubt if any teacher can. To me it seems simply absurd that one person should be expected to take all the subjects of a class.

get here a sure place and a salary they never could earn in the open market. These are the slugs in the garden of education that feed upon the young plants and stunt their growth, and until a higher standard of character is demanded we shall still find them there; for character, and not the acquired knowledge which goes at the present day by the name of education—as if knowledge were education—is the most important thing in the teacher. One thinks with envy of Peroo, the Lascar, in *The Bridge Builders*, with his worship of the great Kashi bridge then in process of being built, and his method of dealing with slackers—" He controlled his own gang of tacklemen—mysterious relatives from Kutch Mandvi gathered month by month and tried to the uttermost. No consideration of family or kin allowed Peroo to keep weak hands or a giddy head on the pay-roll. ' My honour is the honour of this bridge,' he would say to the about-to-be-dismissed. ' What do I care for your honour? Go and work on a steamer. That is all you are fit for.' "

To me the teaching profession is the finest in the world, and the " Long Trail " of education one that merits all that Kipling says. It is " the old trail "—the trail of all life in all the ages, the trail of education of the young for the life that lies before them. It is " our own trail ", for we have made it ours, we have chosen it as the one thing in life worth doing—the trail on which we look to find the joy of living. Let there be no mistake about this. If life is to be more than mere existence we must give our hearts to something and

seek it through life whatever it costs. Poet and metaphysician agree in this.

"In every man's career are certain points
Whereon he dares not be indifferent;
The world detects him clearly, if he dare,
As baffled at the game, and losing life.

We let him choose upon his own account
So long as he 's consistent with his choice.
But certain points, left wholly to himself,
When once a man has arbitrated on,
We say he must succeed there or go hang.
Thus, he should wed the woman he loves most
Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or need—
For he can't wed twice. Then, he must avouch,
Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,
The form of faith his conscience holds the best,
Whate'er the process of conviction was:
For nothing can compensate his mistake
On such a point, the man himself being judge:
He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his soul."[1]

"The man whose nature is such that by one path alone his chief desire will reach consummation, will try to find it on that path, whatever it may be, and whatever the world thinks of it; and, if he does not, he is contemptible. Self-sacrifice is too often the 'great sacrifice' of trade, the giving cheap what is worth nothing. To know what one wants, and to scruple at no means that will get it, may be a harder self-surrender."[2]

[1] BROWNING, *Bishop Blougram's Apology.*
[2] F. H. BRADLEY, *Appearance and Reality.*

## QUALIFICATIONS OF THE TEACHER

" Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!" [1]

To the mere man the trail of the woman who keeps house appears one of endless monotony, of wearisome ever-recurring details that must be looked to, where " creature-comforts " seem almost the aim and end of existence. Yet when he sees what his wife makes of this trail, how to her the golden thread of love can link up all into a unity, how to her the details are seen in the light of her love for her own, he stands ashamed of his own littleness. Can we not make the same of our own trail? For our trail is also " the out trail ". If one of the great ends of education is to develop character, who will set bounds to our trail which leads out into the mystery of human life, out to the limits of human character, if there be such? This land of developing human character, through which we have to travel, makes our trail " the trail that is always new ". The more experience we have, the more wonderful becomes this land—a land where nothing ever is the same. The power for good or evil, for joy or sorrow, which lies in the hands of teachers they only at times realize, and when they do realize it the responsibility is almost too great to be borne. Teaching brings home to a man his own littleness, as it opens up to him the power and possibility of his work. When he sees before him what he might do, what could be done, he realizes that on his trail, if on any, " men bulk big ", and never

[1] BROWNING, *The Statue and the Bust.*

does he feel more keenly how big his own life might be than at the end of some lesson into which he has been pouring the living energy of his soul. The children go out and he returns to his little ordinary self, but with the feeling that for that hour at least he has lived. Those who have never taught may understand when I say that the effect is similar to that of reading a fine poem—say the great speech of Caponsacchi in *The Ring and the Book*. I have thus described the effect elsewhere:—"As we read we are one with him; the glory and the purity of his love for Pompilia is ours, his strength and weakness ours, his suffering ours; we take up his cross, but feel also all the glory of his martyrdom and we return to our little selves humbled and dissatisfied, but full of aspiring hope." [1]

To be entrusted with the work of teaching is a privilege which brings with it a great responsibility—the responsibility of keeping oneself ever fit for the work. How many of the children, in poetry, for instance, depend entirely on what they get from their teachers! It can be a beautiful thing, a joy, a power for good in their lives, or it can be a dead thing, a weariness, a waste of time. For the majority of the children the choice lies with the teacher. The child stands waiting to enter the land of poetry, and it lies with the teacher to lead the way. It is generally admitted that in nothing is our country greater than in its poetry. Is not this—our greatest contribution to the world of art—the finest training ground for our

[1] *The Ring and the Book as a Connected Narrative*, p. 113.

pupils, if we wish to develop the æsthetic sense in them? Let him turn them away, and many of them will never see that land. They are robbed of their birthright. Some people argue that it makes little difference, as few of our pupils read poetry after they leave school. If that were true it would be a condemnation of our schools. But even if it were true, what then? Let poetry be for the children a living joy, a " thing of beauty " while they are with us. Are they not growing —developing? Who can estimate the effect it has on them? Let the boy, during his school life, spend his summer holidays by the sea and among the hills. When he leaves school let him be confined to the town for years or for his life. Will he ever forget the voice of the sea and the hills? They spoke to him in his boyhood of freedom and joy, of freshness and adventure and mystery, of the infinite and the sublime; they helped to mould his character; they are with him for ever. And so it should be with poetry: and so it will be, if the teacher remembers that he is dealing with living, developing characters entrusted to his care—that life will breed life, and death, death.

## CHAPTER III

## CHOICE OF THE POEM

The young teacher is often at a loss as to what poem to take for a lesson. The difficulty is practically always due to the fact that he is looking at poems from the wrong point of view. He may be looking for one which will give him an opportunity of showing his power of questioning, or for one which will test the intelligence of the class, or even for one with a good moral. All these things are quite beside the point. If you are going to teach a poem, the poem is the thing, not your power of questioning; the success of your lesson is to be measured by the joy your pupils find in it, and your questioning is quite out of place unless it is contributing to this. Poems are not intelligence tests, though they are sometimes used as such; and good poems do not have morals. The choice would be much easier if the teacher would say to himself: " Which of the poems I really care for would suit this class?" The rule, then, should be—choose a poem from your own anthology. Have you made no anthology for yourself? Why have you not done so? There are many anthologies, I know; and these will help. But

in love we must choose for ourselves. We cannot love because others love. The anthologies may put before us all the beautiful poems of our literature; but, unless we are specially gifted, we will love only a certain number. These form our anthology. It may be argued that a good poem is good in itself. Yes, but not necessarily good for me. That, of course, would mean my failure and my loss, but we all have our limitations. It is no uncommon thing to find the real lover of Shelley blind to the beauties of Wordsworth, or to find lovers of modern poetry who cannot read *Paradise Lost*. It is true that we ought to try to develop our powers of appreciation, and that we can do so. But when we have done our best we still have our limitations. These limitations bound our anthology, and most of us have but to read straight through an anthology to find them. If the student has been properly taught in school he will be well on the road towards making an anthology before he reaches the Training College. But education in school is so often side-tracked, if not absolutely lost sight of, in examinations that it is quite common to find students afraid to trust their own taste—students who will readily write an appreciation of a poet, but who cannot quote their favourite lines from his poems. They know the accepted criticism of the poet much better than his poetry. This is, of course, the natural result of examinations in poetry. I do not wish to discuss here the whole question of examinations, though it is my experience that those who know most about them

despise them most. Certainly the man who is truly measured by an examination must be a " poor stick ", but it is the rough and ready way of the world, and we have the reply to it in Browning's—

> " But all, the world's coarse thumb
> And finger failed to plumb,
>
> This, I was worth to God."

As the rough and ready way of the world, its success varies with the department of a subject to which it is applied. Thus, while it may get fair results in testing our knowledge of English, it not only fails entirely when it attempts to test our power of appreciating poetry, but develops just what it wishes to discourage—the getting up of criticisms and suitable quotations. The examination becomes the thing, and it is all-important to know what the teacher or the accepted critic or the professor says about the poem, not what the heart says. Yet the aim of teaching poetry is to develop the æsthetic sense, the joy in beauty. We have heard that " fools rush in where angels fear to tread ". When you have taught a poem you love, and seen that light in your pupils' eyes which is the teacher's best reward, you will know that you have reached depths " deeper than did ever plummet sound ". It is true that the knowledge of what critics have said is often of the greatest help to us, opening our eyes to new beauties in the poem; but we must never forget that, when all has been said, what we feel about the poem is the

final truth about the poem for us. Hence the necessity, for the teacher, of making his own anthology. As I have said before, the teacher can communicate only what he feels. He may know many things about a poem and these he may teach as facts, but he cannot " get them across " unless he feels them: unless they come straight from his own heart, they never will reach the hearts of his pupils. In teaching poetry, the first and most important thing we have to do is to make the poem live to the pupils: that is, we must first make them glad in the beauty of the poem, and all furthe teaching of the poem must tend to deepen that gladness Our first aim must be to make them feel, not to make them know—to make them love the beautiful thing, and then to deepen that love through understanding " One cardinal fact about great poetry, as about great philosophy, the very secret, perhaps, of what is called their immortality, is that their main value lies in a process, not in a result. . . . We do not understand a great poem till we have felt it through, and as far as possible re-created in ourselves the emotions which it originally carried."[1] If this is so the teacher must choose his poem from his own anthology. This it seems to me indicates clearly one of the duties of the English Department in a Training College. Here, at least, the student may be encouraged to read and choose for himself, encouraged to trust his own taste. All unconsciously, too, he may be led to develop his taste as

[1] PROFESSOR G. MURRAY, *The Interpretation of Ancient Greek Literature.*

we suggest new lines of reading and new points of view, or bring other poems before him as candidates for inclusion in his anthology. Once he begins to choose for himself he is on the right road. He is beginning to read and enjoy poetry for its own sake, beginning to listen to his own heart. He will have something to teach. He may even lead his pupils to choose for themselves. If I am told that the time allowed for English in our Training Colleges, two periods of fifty minutes each per week, is hopelessly inadequate for such work, I can but say that I know it all too well; but if we wait till sufficient time is allocated to the subject, we shall wait. Nothing is to be gained by waiting. Only by trying it can we make our need felt, only by making our need felt can we hope to get it satisfied.

In choosing from your anthology, have some faith in your pupils. Certain classes of poems are clearly unsuitable for young children. Obscurity of language, or difficulty in the thought or sentiments expressed, rule them out. But the child's power of appreciation is far greater than many teachers think, and there is a freshness and keenness in their joy, in their discovery of a new and beautiful thing, before which our more mature appreciation sometimes pales. How often does the teacher, in his attempt to get down to the level of the children, get far below it. Let him aim rather at lifting the pupils to his own level. It is true that there may be things in the poem which they cannot appreciate fully. Which of us enjoys Milton

or Shakespeare fully? Yet we venture fearlessly, knowing that, though we will never attain to the full appreciation, " their main value lies in a process, not in a result "—in an ever deepening sense of the beauty and truth to be found in them, and to be found in them only by a more careful, more faithful study of the word. If you love the poem, forward with it, then! Do not hesitate about it, or you will fail before you begin. You must not approach the class in a hesitating way. Your own confidence in the poem creates the very atmosphere wanted. My own experience is that the pupils always seemed capable of rising to any level I wished—when I really wished it.

The teacher should always remember that in his class there are probably minds greater than his own—spirits which will travel farther than his farthest. We have all recognized this at times, but how often must it be the case though we do not perceive it? Are we to come down to their level? Is it not a question whether we can rise to theirs? We shall be safe at least if we always aim at lifting the class to our level, striving always to give them the best we have to give. Many a time we gain our deepest insight into a poem when thus teaching it to a class. The very effort seems to give life to our own imaginations and lift us above ourselves.

## CHAPTER IV

## HOW TO INTRODUCE THE POEM

All is now ready for our lesson, but there is still one question to answer. How shall we introduce the poem to our pupils? To me, most introductions amount to distrust, either of the poet or of the pupils; and I would have you trust both. But let us look at some of the methods of introducing a poem.

Some have merely to be mentioned to be rejected. The *biographical*, for instance, in which we introduce the poem by giving a short life of the poet, and, perhaps, an account of how he came to write this poem. This will be in place when the pupils know the poem and are interested in the poet. His importance for them lies in the very fact that he wrote this poem. Give them the poem, and then they will be ready to hear and remember what you wish to tell them about the poet. But remember that biography is not poetry —that what you have to teach at present is the poem, and that the details of the poet's life are absolutely out of place in this lesson unless they contribute directly to the pupil's joy in the poem.

"What porridge had John Keats?" [1]

[1] BROWNING, *Popularity*.

You will find that you have quite sufficient to do in teaching the poem. Get it done in the time, before you are interrupted. How often the lesson is left unfinished, because the teacher had not the sense to go straight to the poem, but must needs thrust himself between the poet and the pupils! All that you have to say can wait till the children have heard what the poet has to say; and if, after hearing him and being happy with him, there is no time for your remarks, do not worry. You set out to teach a poem, and you have taught it. The children can well afford to wait for your remarks if they have had the poet's.

Another method of introducing the poem we may call the *explanatory*. It takes various forms. Sometimes it consists in putting on the board a list of the words which the pupils may find difficult. This, of course, makes the words doubly difficult, as they are now out of their context. It is my experience that, if the poem is read to the class, and the pupils are getting the spirit of it, most of them will divine the meaning of the words from the context. And is not this the best way for a child to learn a new word—to meet it properly used, i.e. in its proper context, and so to divine its meaning, then to have his interpretation of the word confirmed or corrected as need be? It is probable that he will remember that word for the future in the context in which he first met it. What better context could there be? It may be objected that the child cannot get the spirit of the poem

if he is not understanding it fully. No one understands a poem fully at a first reading—no, nor at a second nor a third. Why expect it then from a child? If the vocabulary is so difficult as, for instance, in some of Burns's poems, that the pupils will fail to get the spirit of the poem, the poem is too difficult for the class, and requires exceptional treatment. In this case, we must give the words either at the beginning or in the process of reading. Again, the explanatory introduction sometimes consists in giving a sketch of the story, a sort of line to follow through the poem. This is in place only with poems too difficult, either in thought or expression, for the class, as in some of Browning's short poems. Here, unless we give some help, we find that the first reading fails altogether of effect, as the pupils get nothing. This again is an exceptional case, and likely to occur only with advanced pupils. In all other cases the poet should be allowed to tell his own tale. He can do it best. But perhaps the worst form of this method is that in which the teacher warns the class of the good things coming, telling them to note the effect of this line or word, of that description or figure of speech. Let the child have the poem fresh: let him gather his own little garland and have the joy of discovering for himself. How else can we train his taste? The pupils ought to be allowed to look straight at the poem with an unbiassed mind, that it may have its own effect upon them. They should hear it twice at least before any criticism of any kind is passed. In his teaching after-

wards it is for the teacher to make sure that they have missed none of its beauties. He will probably be astonished at the amount they have found for themselves. This is just what he ought to encourage most, this power of feeling and perceiving for themselves.

A third form of introduction is to try to give the proper atmosphere or setting for the poem, and so prepare the child's mind to receive it. The intention seems to me good, and this method is employed by many good teachers of poetry. Afraid lest the children should miss the beauty of the poem, they try to awaken in them the spirit of expectancy. But why fear? This seems to me lack of faith in the poet or the pupils. Take as an example, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. If you read the poem, your voice, your manner of reading, will awaken the pupils to attention, and they will get the atmosphere at once from the poem. You cannot give it as Keats does. He does it perfectly. But note also that in giving the atmosphere you have robbed the poem of part of its freshness. Let the pupils have the joy of discovering themselves in the land of faery, and of forming their own first impressions of it. You have something to give them, I know, but there will be a time for that. Meanwhile Keats waits to speak to your pupils and you have to introduce him. If he were there in person, would you be long about the matter? Have you not often heard long-winded chairmen introducing an important speaker, while the audience sat impatiently, wishing he would

get done and let the speaker speak? Once again I say: " Have faith in the poet and in your pupils, and go straight to the poem."

Lastly, I would refer to a method, sometimes called the *synthetic*, in which, by means of an ingenious series of questions, the teacher appears to draw the poem from the class. " Appears ", I say, because it is evident that you cannot draw a poem, say of Wordsworth, from a class of children. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.* The poem is not in them, but, if I may so put it, in the teacher—and so in his questions, and in his selection of the answers given to these questions. Let it be admitted at once that some poems can be so treated. Let it be admitted also that this method demands great ingenuity and skilful questioning on the part of the teacher, and that the whole can form a most attractive show lesson. There is no reason why the teacher should not exercise himself in this way occasionally, if he pleases, so long as he does not call this teaching poetry. This method is merely an introduction to a poem; and, be it noted, an introduction where none is needed, as the poems which can be treated thus are simple enough to be read to the class. I say " merely an introduction to the poem ", as the class does not know the poem beforehand, or what becomes of the method? Nor have they the words of the poem before them, as these are to be drawn from them; and when they have been drawn from them and written down, still they have not the poem, for a poem is not a written thing, but sound, and it does not exist for the class till

they have heard it read and so felt the music and beauty of it. All the questioning and building that go to the drawing of the poem from the class, are merely an exhibition of the teacher's skill, not an exhibition of the beauty of the work of art. Until the children have the work of art before them, how can they feel its beauty or the beauty of its parts? One can appreciate the beauty of every line in a fine drawing: yes, but it is the beauty of the line *in the drawing*. Its beauty lies in what it contributes to the work of art. It has little or no beauty in itself. Take some of the greatest lines in our literature.

" Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir."

Here, Professor Bradley says, we are on " the topmost peaks of poetry ". Yet the line apart from its context is nothing. Is there any more profoundly moving line in Wordsworth than

" And never lifted up a single stone,"

or in Shelley than

" Now
We shall not do it any more "

yet what are they apart from their context?

But, I need not labour the point. If we wish to develop the æsthetic sense and lead our pupils to find beauty for themselves, how can we do it but by giving them the poem, reading it to them till they know it, and then dealing with what they have? If it is a poem

you love, all it needs is your voice to carry it home to the hearts of your pupils. As I have said already, our first aim must be to make them feel, not to make them know, to make them love the beautiful thing, and then to deepen that love through understanding.

## CHAPTER V

## HOW TO READ THE POEM

I have pointed out already that in teaching poetry we must remember that it is an art. I am sorry to repeat the platitude, but some things are so plain that many people cannot see them; and, certainly, many teachers treat poetry as if they had never heard that it was an art. One would like to say to them, " If a poem is a work of art, what excuse is to be offered for your method of handling it; and if it is not, what is it?" Now, I must quote another platitude: one which is fundamental to the teaching of poetry, but which, like the one above, is too plain to be seen. Poetry is an art of the ear, not of the eye—in other words, poetry is sound, not sight. We are so accustomed to the printed page that we forget that those symbols, those printed words, are not the poem. Few of us make this mistake with regard to a page of music, because we are not familiar enough with these symbols. The music does not exist for us till we hear it. A real musician, of course, can hear it in his imagination, and a real lover of poetry can hear a poem in the same way. But does not the musician hum over the piece,

or play it on some instrument, or long for an orchestra, that he may really hear it? In the same way, nothing is more common among lovers of poetry than reading it aloud to themselves. If the poem is an old favourite, it is repeated aloud that they may get the full luxury of the music. If the poem is new, it must be read aloud that they may hear every tone of it. They will not trust to their imagination. Our debt to the printing press is great—so great that it is vain to try to measure it—but it has not all been gain, and one of the losses to the people in general is that they no more hear the voice of poetry. In the old days the poet chanted his poems to the people, and the people loved them. Everywhere he was a welcome guest, one received with honour: no feast or gathering was complete without him, and he was called by the high name of ποιητής—a maker, a maker of music, a poet, or, in our old Scots dialect, a " makar ". But now the poets are silent, the poems are hidden in books, and the people love them no longer, for they cannot hear them. But gather them together and read them your favourite poems and the old love will awaken. So it is with our pupils. They are but beginners in poetry. They do not know that it is music. They cannot read it. If I were asked: " How can the teacher best help the normal child to understand a poem?" I would answer: " By reading the poem aloud to him." What has the teacher to say about the poem comparable with what the poet himself will say, if the pupil can but hear him? I know that you will find children who

read poetry for themselves, but they form a small percentage. For the great majority the poem does not exist until it is read aloud. The printed words convey little meaning to them, because they have not heard the beauty of sound and rhythm they contain. Yet in teaching a poem, this reading aloud that the children may hear is the part most often neglected, or the importance of which is most completely misunderstood. In teaching a new poem, some teachers get the children to read it aloud, one verse each. Now, an experienced reader of poetry cannot read a poem aloud at first sight. How can he? He has not felt it. Let me repeat what Professor Murray says: "We do not understand a great poem till we have felt it through, and as far as possible re-created in ourselves the emotions which it originally carried." He must understand the poem in this sense before he can read it. What then is the child to make of one verse, the whole meaning of which may depend on what has gone before, and how are the pupils to get the beauty of the poem from such reading, and what are we to think of the teachers who thus present a new poem to their pupils? Bad as this is, it is not much worse than the performance of some teachers when they read the poem aloud. It is evident at once, from the perfunctory manner in which it is read, that the reading is considered a simple thing of little importance—a thing that requires no preparation, that is done apparently merely to make sure that the pupils get the words, not to make sure that they get the poem. Can it be said that these

teachers know they are dealing with a work of art, and an art that appeals to the ear? If so, their reading is an impertinence, a wanton insult to the poem. But note, having read the poem once, they plunge into the teaching of it, as if it were their teaching that mattered, not their reading. What is it that matters? Well, if you are teaching a poem, I should say it is the poem that matters, and the poem is not there, in the books before the children, but exists for them while it is read. The important thing is that the children should get the poem. How can they get the poem from one perfunctory careless reading? If they are to understand it they must first feel it, and this requires time. To hurry on to teach a poem before the children have had time to form their own impressions shows entire ignorance of the purpose for which poetry is taught. If we wish to develop the æsthetic sense, to train the children to find the beauty in a poem, and so to enable them to read and appreciate poetry for themselves, we must give them time to form their own impressions, we must encourage them to do so, and try to make them understand that what they feel about the poem is the truth about it for them. Certainly we must try to guide them; but we do that to begin with by choosing the poem, and, secondly, when they have formed their impressions, by going over the poem and trying to show them new beauties, or to deepen their impressions of those they have discovered for themselves. Nothing is so important as to help the children to find the beauty for themselves—to give

them confidence that they may form their own impressions and not merely wait to be told what to feel. How are we to help them? By making sure that they get the poem before we have touched it. How are we to make sure that they get the poem? By reading the poem as we should read it.

We all remember the famous passage in the *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus goes to consult the shades of the dead; how he digs the trench and pours a drink-offering to all the dead: "But when I had besought the tribes of the dead with vows and prayers, I took the sheep and cut their throats over the trench, and the dark blood flowed forth, and lo, the spirits of the dead that be departed gathered them from out of Erebus. Brides and youths unwed, and old men of many and evil days, and tender maidens with grief yet fresh at heart; and many there were, wounded with bronze-shod spears, men slain in fight with their bloody mail about them. And these many ghosts flocked together from every side about the trench with a wondrous cry, and pale fear gat hold on me . . . and myself I drew the sharp sword from my thigh and sat there, suffering not the strengthless heads of the dead to draw nigh to the blood."[1] One at a time they are allowed to drink of the blood; and then, and only then, can they speak, and give him the information he desires.

In his lecture on "The Interpretation of Ancient Greek Literature", Professor Murray, referring to the

[1] *The Odyssey*, Book XI, translated by Butcher and Lang.

duty of the scholar to breathe his life into the spirits of the mighty dead that we may hear them speak, quotes from a German scholar: "We all know that ghosts will not speak till they have drunk blood, and we must give them the blood of our hearts." Let us imagine that the poem we are going to read is *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. The ghost of Keats stands waiting to speak to our pupils, but he cannot speak until he has drunk the blood of our hearts. What would we not give to make the poet live again! This cannot be, but we can hear his voice again, we can make his poem live, if we will but pour our life into it. You must live the poem while you read it. Voice-training and elocution are excellent helps, but they are nothing unless you live the poem. The emotions of the poem must thrill you and live in your voice. Is it the mystery of faery, or the wild joy of battle, the call of the sea or the hills, or the happy laughter of children? These must live in you. Can you not feel them? What do you suppose you are doing then when you read the poem? You think it a little thing to read a poem? It is a great thing, a heart-shaking thing, an uplifting, inspiring thing: it is life at its highest. It will try you to the uttermost, and leave you, at times, with quivering lips and eyes dimmed. And there are passages you will not dare to read aloud lest you break down. This it is to read a poem. You may have a poor voice, you may read badly, but if you are pouring your heart's blood into the poem it will carry across. It cannot fail. But there must be whole-

hearted devotion to the poem. You must not hesitate or hold back. You must give yourself to the poem without fear. "Love casteth out fear." This is the greatest thing you can do for your pupils in poetry—the greatest help you can give them. All your teaching and criticism are nothing beside this. To make a beautiful poem live to children, so that they are glad in its beauty, is to get right home to their hearts. Read the poem, and read it again and again, till they know it, and you will have accomplished the first and most important part of your duty—to make them love the beautiful thing. What more remains to do? To deepen that love through understanding.

# CHAPTER VI

## METHOD OF TEACHING THE POEM

"I am not here pleading for any mere enthusiasm or Schwärmerei, any enticing theory of short cuts by which you can reach 'the spirit' while neglecting 'the letter'. The letter is the road to the spirit, and it is only through the exactitudes of the letter that the spirit can be made visible. It is not less hard work that I am asking for: I almost fear it is more." [1]

I am frequently asked by students, "How should this poem be taught? What method ought I to employ?" My answer to this is simply that there is no definite method that ought to be employed; that it is like love-making—each must do it in his own way; and when they look disappointed I tell them that teaching poetry is like life, that we can lay down a few main principles that ought to be followed, but that the method of applying these principles varies with the class, the poem, and the teacher. This fact was driven home to me when first I began to watch students teach. On two or three occasions I had put down among my first

[1] Professor G. Murray, *The Interpretation of Ancient Greek Literature*, p. 21.

notes: " This is not a suitable poem for the class," or else: " This method will not do." As the lesson proceeded and I watched the class and saw their eyes brighten, I had to add another note, that the poem was suitable, and that the method " did ". I now have learned what I ought to have known, that the power of individual enthusiasm is immeasurable, but that it will flow freely only in its own channel. And so, when it comes to the method of teaching the poem, I have only two or three principles to lay down. But, first, by way of warning, do not forget the purpose of your teaching, what you are aiming at in teaching the poem- to add to the child's joy in the poem, to increase his power of appreciating its beauty. Some people object to teaching the poem at all, holding that we ought to allow the pupils to form their own impressions, and that we have no right to interfere with them. This view arises, I imagine, in opposition to the method I have already condemned, of thrusting our impressions upon the children before they have had time to form their own. It is a claim for the right of the child to develop in its own individual way. Both methods are exaggerations. It is true that the children ought to form their own impressions and hold to them, but it is also true that they should get any help we can give them in doing so—that what the teacher can give will help to strengthen the original impression, and may lead to a broader and deeper view of the poem. That is the only reason for teaching the poem. If the poem is one from the teacher's own anthology and he has really read the

poem to the children, he has already done much to aid them in forming their impressions and has already contributed largely to them. If he has nothing further to contribute, nothing that will add to the child's joy in the beauty of the poem, he had better be silent and not spoil the good work he has done. But how often is this the case? If, however, we are anxious to give the utmost liberty to the child to form its own impressions, we can adopt the method of teaching the poems in groups. We may devote the whole period for poetry for one day to reading and re-reading three or four poems to the class and leave the teaching of these poems to another day. With Post-Intermediate pupils this often forms a most effective lesson. Read Keats's *Ode to Autumn*, then Shelley's *Wild West Wind*, Keats's *Nightingale*, then Shelley's *Skylark*. If you have really read them you have done a good period of work and the poems form such an excellent contrast that the impressions formed by the one help to bring out the impressions formed by the other.

That the matter may be put into form, let me suppose that the poem has been read. The children look up expectantly. How are we to begin? One thing we must try not to do. We must not dissipate the enthusiasm we have aroused by our reading. We must avoid, at all costs, making the teaching of the lesson an anti-climax to the reading. This is not easy, but if we keep it in mind it will help us to avoid the more serious faults. I would have the teacher go straight to the heart of the poem—that which set the poet writing; the

beautiful scene or story or idea. The poem is a unity. Treat it as one, not as a series of details. Do not begin at the beginning, and plod through, verse by verse, taking difficult words and figures of speech as they come. But go straight to the heart of the poem and let your teaching show how all the details contribute to the beauty of the unity. I cannot make this clear without an illustration. I shall take then the lesson I wrote for the *Educational Journal* four or five years ago on Wordsworth's *Daffodils*. Let us imagine that the poem has been read, twice at least, and the pupils look up. What more can we give them? The heart of the poem here is the scene and its effect on the poet. Get the scene then. Here I would point out that in getting the scene, the spirit must be one of friendly co-operation, the teacher and pupils working together to paint the scene. Do not question and correct the pupils as if you were testing their knowledge. Remember that they have got the atmosphere of the poem in the best way, from the poem itself, and that this atmosphere must pervade the lesson. I cannot emphasize too much the importance of this. As I said already, do not forget the purpose of your teaching, what you are aiming at doing. Voice, manner, everything must, as far as possible, be in harmony with this atmosphere. What hope to look for joy if we drive our pupils to it, shout at them, correct them and mock them for their mistakes! On the contrary, invite them to help you to paint the scene as Wordsworth saw it.

What did the poet see first? "A crowd, a host of

golden daffodils." Where were they? " Beside the lake, beneath the trees." How were they arranged beside the lake—in clusters or scattered about?

> " They stretched in never-ending line
> Along the margin of a bay."

We have, then, the little bay in the lake and round its margin are trees and beneath them are the daffodils, not in clumps, but in never-ending line. Are we to imagine, then, a single line of daffodils? No! because that would not give the impression the poet gives of their great number. What expressions does he use to show the great number of the daffodils? A crowd, a host, ten thousand,

> " Continuous as the stars that shine
> And twinkle on the milky way."

What is the Milky Way? Here the teacher describes the Milky Way, giving, if he wishes, the old Greek myth, and from the picture of the great belt of glimmering light stretching across the sky at night gets the picture of the daffodils stretched round the bay in a great golden belt. Do the daffodils shine and twinkle as the stars do? Yes, they shine, for Wordsworth says they are golden, and they twinkle, because they are fluttering in the breeze. Point out that this makes the simile perfect. (Details such as this, of course, will be taken or omitted according to the age of the class.) Is the picture complete now? No! the waves were dancing. There is our landscape; the bay of the

lake, with its dancing waves, and beneath the trees, stretching round the margin of the bay a great belt of shimmering golden daffodils. Is this the picture as Wordsworth saw it? We shall see later. The teacher now tells the children of Wordsworth's criticism of landscapes; how he declared he would think nothing of a landscape unless he could tell from it at once the season of the year and the kind of day. Having made sure that the children understand the meaning of the word landscape, put the position before them; suppose that opposite the school there was a green meadow, with a river flowing through it and with trees here and there, that would be a real landscape; now, if you had forgotten what season of the year it was, could you tell by looking out of the window at the landscape? Yes, by the trees and the grass and the flowers. Could you tell also what kind of day it was? Yes, you would see the sun shining or the rain falling or the wind blowing. How would you see the wind? You would see the branches of the trees swaying, and the grass and flowers bending, and ripples on the surface of the river. We agree, then, with Wordsworth in his criticism, and point out that this poem is just a landscape painted in words, and ask the children to apply his criticism to his own picture. Can you tell the season of the year? Frequently, at this point, the answer has come in a sort of triumphant shout: "Yes, Daffodils!" Having got the season of the year, can we tell the kind of day? It was windy. The daffodils were fluttering and dancing in the breeze and the waves were dancing.

Was the sun shining or was it cloudy? Here I have got the answer, " It was cloudy," and the line quoted, " I wandered lonely as a cloud," which gave an opportunity, not for checking the boy, and spoiling the good time we were having, and at the same time making him afraid to risk another answer, but for pointing out the difference between literal and figurative language, illustrating it from the figure we had already dealt with, " continuous as the stars that shine ", and telling the boy not to forget the line he had quoted, as we would want it later. Do encourage your pupils to try! But we are still waiting to know whether the sun was shining or not. Now comes the answer, " Yes, the waves were sparkling." Is there anything else that makes you believe the sun was shining? Here I have never failed to get the answer, " a host of golden daffodils ", and the information that daffodils are only really golden in the sunlight. We agree then that it was a breezy, sunny day, and point out how beautifully Wordsworth has brought the sunlight into his picture by the use of two words, *golden* and *sparkling*. (Much should be made of this according to the age of the pupils.) What about our picture; did we not forget the sunlight? Try here to make the children feel how great a difference would be made in our landscape by bringing in the sunlight, and get them to tell the various changes it would make—how it seems to make the landscape live. This will be important later. Is our picture now complete? Do we see now what the poet saw? We shall see later. We want now to discover

what was the effect of the scene upon the poet. To understand this we must try to get at the condition he was in, before he saw the picture. We turn to the boy who made the mistake, and ask him for his line: " I wandered lonely as a cloud." Here we are led at once to distinguish between being lonely and feeling lonely and conclude that Wordsworth was wandering along alone—dreaming, but not feeling lonely. (I am not forgetting the *Journal*, nor that Dorothy was with him. She was not with him in the poem.) So Wordsworth was wandering along alone, in a dreamy mood, when he saw this picture. Yes, but he saw something that we have not put into the picture. What have we missed? Here we must draw attention to the fact that to understand Wordsworth we must often take his words very literally. He says the daffodils are dancing and he means that they are happy, not that they look happy, but that they *are* happy, dancing for joy. The waves are dancing too, " but they outdid the sparkling waves in glee ". And now the teacher puts the question, " Suppose I told you children that yesterday I was walking alone, dreaming, when I came upon a real jolly company, and that they were having such a good time and were so happy that I could not help rejoicing with them—what sort of company would you think I was talking about?" The answer comes at once: " A company of ladies and gentlemen, or boys and girls." But what does Wordsworth say?

" A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company."

Now we get the meaning of jocund, and ask what company he refers to. "The daffodils." How, then, does he talk about the daffodils? "As if they were human beings." This answer I have had from a qualifying class—average age eleven. It could be drawn from much younger children. It contains the essence of Wordsworth's philosophy of nature, and it lies now with the teacher, according to the age of the children, to explain and expand this view, adding such lines as,

> "And 'tis my faith that every flower
> Enjoys the air it breathes."

Now, what did Wordsworth see in the scene that we forgot to put into the picture? The answer comes, "That the daffodils were dancing." "But," the teacher replies, "we did put in that it was a windy day, and that the daffodils were fluttering in the breeze and that the waves were dancing." Then comes the answer, "He saw that they were happy, that they were dancing for joy." "Now," says the teacher, "suppose you were standing beside me looking at the class while I was explaining something, and all the faces were serious, when suddenly the door opened, the headmaster came in and announced that you were to get no home lessons to-night and a holiday to-morrow, can you imagine the smile of joy that would pass over the class and light up all the faces? When we painted this scene first, do you remember that we forgot to put in the sunlight and what a difference it made? Well, this is another kind of sunlight—what we might

call the sunlight of the mind or spirit, and this is the most beautiful thing that Wordsworth saw in the scene." Let us put that into our picture too. And what was the immediate effect upon him? " It filled him with joy." We now take the two lines,

> " I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
> What wealth the show to me had brought,"

and ask what wealth means, and get at once: " Plenty of money." What does it mean here? " Plenty of happiness." Here we have the opportunity of dealing with the meaning of weal and its relation to wealth, comparing with heal and health, and pointing out that this is the best kind of wealth. The last verse shows the wealth he gained, and here if we wish we can point out the two lines contributed by his wife. We explain also the meaning of pensive, adding that this vacant or pensive mood strikes us as a repetition of the mood he suggests in the first line, and confirms the idea that he was not feeling lonely, but was wandering along dreaming. And now one last question. Have you noticed what is perhaps the most important idea in the poem as it occurs in each verse? and we gather the expressions,

1st verse, " *Dancing* in the breeze";
2nd verse, " Tossing their heads in sprightly *dance*";
3rd verse, " The waves beside them *danced*, but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee";
4th verse, " And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And *dances* with the daffodils."

Yes, the daffodils dance for joy all through the poem, and Wordsworth's heart danced with them, and our hearts ought to dance with them too. I might add that in more advanced classes a very fine effect can be obtained here by reading to the pupils the following passage from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal describing the same scene, and comparing it with the poem.

" 15th April, 1802.

" When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the water-side. We fancied that the sea had floated the seeds ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about and above them; some rested their heads upon these stones, as on a pillow, for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, that blew upon them over the lake; they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot, and a few stragglers higher up; but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway."

Now let the teacher finish by reading the poem again.

What has been accomplished? Lest there be any misunderstanding, let me repeat that this is not *the* method in which this poem ought to be taught, but *a* method which I have used, and that any teacher wishing to test this method would require to choose what would suit his class—and in this I refer not only to age, but also to locality, for what may be easy and clear to the country child may be difficult for the town child, and *vice versa*. I have written out this lesson as an illustration of how the principles might be applied. What then has been accomplished in this lesson? The poem has been read once or twice by the teacher to begin with, till we feel that the pupils have got the poem. Then when the pupils look up for more, we have gone straight to the heart of the poem and attempted to draw out their enthusiasm in painting the scene and its effect on Wordsworth. We ha to return to our picture to add what we had misse in our attempt at painting the scene—first, the sun light, and secondly, that which gives the Words worthian touch, the atmosphere of joy which pervades the whole poem. We have been led in the course of the lesson to give a short statement of Wordsworth's view of nature, because we have found it in the poem, and the pupils are now ready for it, ready to pass fro the concrete, the poem, to the abstract, the poet's method of looking at nature. In addition we have dealt with many details, but not as details, but attempting to show what each contributes to the beauty of the whole. We finish by reading the poem agai

that the poem as now understood may have its full effect on the pupils. It does not seem to me that the child's joy will have diminished any because of our teaching: it does seem to me that we have deepened and broadened the effect the poem had on him at first.

As I have said above, the method of applying the principles varies with the poem. Let me take another, one entirely different in character, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, and attempt to show this. The heart of the poem here is the beauty of the story told, if I may so put it, in a succession of beautiful pictures—in the wonderful atmosphere of mystery and mediæval romance that broods over it, and in what Matthew Arnold would call the felicity of the diction in which it is told. Young children cannot appreciate this fully, I know; but who, save such another poet as Keats, could? Appreciation is a matter of degree. Take the poem you know best, write it out carefully in the form of a lesson, and at the end you will probably have discovered something new in it. Often as I have taught Wordsworth's *Daffodils*, and in spite of the fact that I had written it out carefully as a lesson some years ago for the *Educational Journal*, it was a real joy to work it out again, as I have done above, for in doing so, I discovered one or two new things that seemed to deepen my appreciation of the whole poem. Do not let us forget that " A thing of beauty is a joy for ever " —a spring that never runs dry. So long as we are living, developing, and, therefore, *changing* characters, so long must the poem have new beauties, new depths

of meaning for us. It is the test of a real poem that you cannot drain it dry.

" Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing."

I love Walter de la Mare's *Peacock Pie*, and so does my little girl. She does not get all that I get, I know; but then, do I get all that she gets? And so with *La Belle Dame sans Merci.* There can be no question that the pupils, especially girls, love the poem, and many of them will never get the poem at all unless they get it in the Elementary Department. I think the test for a poem should be " Can the children enjoy it?" " Does it go home to them?" If so, take it, trusting that as the years pass they may get more and more home to it. There are few poems in the language of such perfect, flawless beauty as this. We want the best for the children. I would have them familiarized with the most beautiful things we have, so long as the children can appreciate them enough to love them. I think, also, we ought to remember the finer spirits that may be in the class, to whom such a perfect work of art as *La Belle Dame sans Merci* may come as an awakening.

We read the poem to the class, twice at least, and when the pupils look up we proceed at once to the pictures, remembering always, as I said above, that through our reading the atmosphere of the poem has

already impressed itself upon the pupils and that we must keep our teaching in harmony with it. (I may add that I shall deal more briefly with this poem than with the last.) We call upon the children now to help us to build up the various scenes of the poem. What have we in the first picture? A knight at arms. Get the full significance of " at arms ". The rich armour is part of the colour of the picture, and we shall have something to say of it later. Where is he? Wandering alone by a lake. What time of the year is it? Late autumn. The sedge is withered, the birds are silent.

> " The squirrel's granary is full,
> And the harvest 's done."

What does the reference to squirrels suggest? That there are trees about. What is the squirrel's granary? Compare with the harvest. Both are preparations for the coming winter. Describe the knight. He is pale, haggard, woe-begone, his white brow moist with anguish, the colour gone from his cheeks. Though in armour, then, his visor is up. He is loitering by the lake. Why loitering? Is that better than wandering? Yes, because it makes clear that he is without hope. We loiter when we have nothing to do, nothing to look for. What kind of picture is this? Bare, silent, desolate, hopeless. What makes us feel it hopeless? The fact that even in his anguish the knight loiters by the lake. Were there any hope we could not use this word. What, in the time of the year, suggests the

same feeling? The fact that the year is dying. Winter is coming. Yet there is more in the picture. In what form has Keats put his statements? In the form of questions. What effect does this have on us? We are expecting an answer. There is a feeling then of expectancy, but when we think of the scene what kind of answer do we expect? Something strange, something mysterious. This leads us straight to the next picture. Point out to the children how, simple as the knight's language is, his description gives us all we want to know. It could not have been put more shortly or more simply or more completely. He tells us

> " I met a lady in the meads,
> Full beautiful—a faery's child."

How do we know that he recognized at once that the lady was a faery's child? By the manner in which he describes her—the long hair, the light foot, as if she were not of the earth, and the wild light in her eyes.

> " Her hair was long, her foot was light,
> And her eyes were wild."

Repeat these lines to the children. There is nothing more perfect in the poem, no finer description of a faery's child in literature. What did the knight do?

> " I made a garland for her head,
> And bracelets too, and fragrant zone."

What did he make them of? Flowers. What kind of

flowers? Sweet smelling flowers as shown by " fragrant zone ". We explain zone and ask what season of the year we are in now. It is summer, and summer is the season of joy. Complete the picture. What did the knight do next?

> " I set her on my pacing steed."

Note the effect of the word *steed*. Ask the children how the line would do thus—I set her on my pacing horse. Use here Ruskin's famous illustration from *Mazeppa*:

> " Bring forth the horse! the horse was brought;
> In truth, he was a noble steed!"

and, as he suggests, re-write thus:

> " Bring forth the steed! the steed was brought;
> In truth, he was a noble horse!"

In painting this scene I would let the children's imagination run free. For instance, I would ask what colour was the steed, and when they look to the poem I would add that they would not find the colour there, that they must suggest the colour. When they begin suggesting I would add, " But suppose we get the rest of the picture complete and that may help us." We have then the splendid steed, and on its back the faery's child with her long hair and the wild light in her eyes, and the beautiful fragrant flowers round her head, wrists, and waist. The knight walks holding the

bridle, his armour gleaming in the sunlight. Where does he look? Into her eyes.

> " For sidelong would she bend, and sing
> A faery's song."

And is that all the scene? No, there is the background. It is summer and they walk through the green meadows under the trees. What colour shall we make the steed? Think of the lady, the faery's child, on its back, the shining armour of the knight, the rich trappings of the steed, and the background, the trees, the green meadows, the sunlight and all the rich colours of summer—and when the children are ready to dispute about the point we say: " Let each one decide for himself. Each of us must paint his own picture from a poem, and when the poet leaves us free, as in a point like this, we ought to choose for ourselves." And now take a moment to compare this scene with the first, that the children may feel how the contrast makes them stand out. In the first scene we have the knight, in his anguish, his armour as we now guess rusted. It is late autumn, cold, bare, withered, dead, hopeless, with an atmosphere of expectancy and mystery. Here the knight is in his strength, his armour gleaming, and here we have summer and warmth and colour and beauty and life and love, and over all the wild light from the eyes of the faery's child. For as the charm falls on him and he " nothing else saw all day long ", so the charm falls on us and we pass into the land of faery. Thus it seems

perfectly natural that she should find for him faery food:

> " She found me roots of relish sweet,
> And honey wild and manna dew ",

and that she should speak to him in a faery language:

> " And sure in language strange she said—
> ' I love thee true '! "—

and that she should take him to her faery home:

> " She took me to her elfin grot."

There the charm is completed when he kisses her " wild wild eyes ", and she lulls him asleep.

The next picture is the terrible dream.

> " I saw pale kings and princes too,
> Pale warriors, death-pale were they all."

Who were they? The former victims of La Belle Dame; and now we understand why she is called *sans Merci*. Of whom do they remind us? Of the knight as he appeared in the first picture. What do they tell him? That he is now under the spell of La Belle Dame sans Merci.

> " And I awoke and found me here,
> On the cold hill's side."

The knight was lulled to sleep in the elfin grot by all the charms of faery. He returns through the land of dreams to the plain everyday world. Which word in

the above two lines brings the change most home to us? The word *cold*. The warmth and colour and joy and charm of faery seem to fade away at once into the cold hill's side. What says the knight?

" And this is why I sojourn here."

Meaning of *sojourn*? He is not there for a day. He is there to stay till he joins the spirits of his dream. Note the effect of the last verse. The children are apt to take it as a repetition of the first verse. But it is not a repetition, for it is not a question. The question has been answered. The tale is told. We are back to the lake, the withered sedge, the silent birds, and the knight

" Alone and palely loitering ".

Let the teacher now read the poem again to close the lesson.

Once again, what has been accomplished? We have attempted to treat the poem as a unity—here the unity of a series—to go straight to the heart of the poem and show how the various pictures, the various details and sometimes the particular words used each contribute to the beauty of the whole. It does seem to me that this lesson will help the child to realize more of the beauty and faery mystery than he would easily get himself. I know by experience that it is a joy to teach this lesson, and I cannot but believe that the joy is shared by the pupils. Both these poems can be taken in the Elementary Department or at any

later stage. I have taken them with pupils at all stages, and with students in the college. As a last example, let me take one that is a little more difficult in language and thought, and so more suitable for pupils over twelve years of age, and as we have had beauty of scene and beauty of story, let us take this time beauty of idea. I shall take *Death the Leveller*, by Shirley, and merely sketch a method, with little reference to details; and as this poem is not quite so well known I quote it.

## DEATH THE LEVELLER

(*James Shirley*, 1596–1666)

" The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against Fate;
Death lays his icy hand on kings:
Sceptre and Crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crookèd scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,
And plant fresh laurels where they kill:
But their strong nerves at last must yield;
They tame but one another still:
Early or late
They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow;
Then boast no more your mighty deeds!
Upon Death's purple altar now
See where the victor-victim bleeds.
Your heads must come
To the cold tomb:
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust."

Once again, the poem having been read and re-read, the pupils look up. We direct them to the name of the poem and ask, " Why is Death called a leveller?" and pass to the distinction between shadows and substantial things. I have generally found this a most interesting point to get. We ask " What are ' the glories of our blood and state '? " When we get such answers as: " A kingdom ", " A large estate ", " Wealth ", and ask if these are shadows, we frequently, from boys at least, get an emphatic " No!" We take the words literally then, and distinguish between shadow and substance, the latter independent of the light, the former coming with the light, moving as the light moves, and vanishing as the light goes out. The substance then endures while the shadows pass away with the light. Now, get the metaphor clear. Does the poet mean that the glories of our blood and state are actually shadows? No! that they are like shadows. In what way do they resemble shadows? They pass away. Yes, but where do they go? Either to other people or, at least, away from the person who had them. Life then is the light, and when life goes the

shadows go with them. But we must remember that the substantial things remain. In this poem there are great opportunities for showing the part played in poetry by figures of speech, such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and personification. The above example of metaphor can be used to show how pregnant the language of the poet is. Write out the meaning, literally, and put it beside the figure of speech, and the pupils see at once how much more powerful and weighty the poetry is than the prose. Now let us go through the poem and look for the shadows and the substantial things. But what says the third line? Is it true? Is there no armour against fate? Are all things then shadows? But we shall see. Note the fourth line and the effect of the personification of Death and the metaphor *icy*. Again in *sceptre*, *crown*, *crooked scythe*, *spade*, we have fine examples of metonymy. Put them into literal language that the children may see how the magic of poetry vanishes. The first verse alone makes clear that the name of the poem is well chosen. But does the fact that Death levels all mean that they are all shadows? I have generally found that this question puzzles the pupils, and as we merely wish to raise the subject at this point we pass on. I need hardly touch the second verse. Here we deal with the great soldiers, and we see them also levelled, the captives of Death. But the point we have raised above is still not settled, and, by the way, have we found anything yet that is not a shadow? Is the poet merely teaching " Vanity of vanities, all is

Vanity"? We pass to the third verse, and, after dealing with the first two lines, we read to them Shelley's sonnet:

" I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
' My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

We make clear to them the picture of the wreck of the statue; the " two vast and trunkless legs of stone " standing in the desert, the shattered visage lying half-sunk in the sand with its " frown and wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command ". Then we draw attention to the words on the pedestal:

" My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!"

and put beside them the words from our poem:

" Then boast no more your mighty deeds ";

and then turn to the final lines of the sonnet:

" Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

What has become of his garlands? The sonnet helps to bring home to the children the truth of the poem. Passing on, we note the effect of *purple* in the third line, and of all that is contained in *victor-victim*. We note also the synedoche in " *your heads* must come ", pointing out its appropriateness. It carries on the figure of " the garlands wither on your brow ". The glories are represented by garlands, but the garlands wither and the heads must come to the " cold tomb ". And now we come suddenly upon the last couplet. Strange as it may seem, I have generally found that the pupils, though they are quite aware of the couplet, have failed to appreciate its effect. I say we come now suddenly upon the last couplet, for it comes like a discovery. Here is something that does not pass away. Here, then, are the substantial things we have been looking for. But what about the just? Has not Death levelled them also? Evidently. The couplet shows it. What is the meaning of the lines, if not that, when the just have been brought, as all are, to the dust, their actions still live on and " blossom in their dust "? What are we to include in the " actions of the just "? Ask the pupils if they have enjoyed the poem; if they have, point out that Shirley died in 1666. In that year Death the Leveller brought him to the dust. But did this poem die then too? No! It still lives and gives us

pleasure. It then is not a shadow but a substantial thing. It still

" Smells sweet and blossoms in his dust ".

Here I would read, as a contrast to the sonnet above, and as a confirmation of this last point, Cory's poem beginning:

" They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead ",

drawing particular attention to the last two lines;

" Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales, awake;
For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take."

Now we are on the track of the things that do not pass away, scientific discoveries, works of art of all kinds, great deeds of courage and self-sacrifice, and here we ask for the line that appears on our War Memorials, " Their name liveth for evermore ". But in what do all these things that live resemble each other? This is a difficult question, but we can lead them to the answer that they are all triumphs of the spirit. The poem says, " The glories of our blood and state "; well, these are the glories of the spirit. And so the poem means to us that the glories of the flesh are temporal and pass away, but the glories of the spirit are eternal and endure.

" The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;

Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust."

And now read the poem again to close the lesson.

It would be easy to give other illustrations, but these will suffice. I have aimed at showing by these lessons,

1st: That we should allow the pupils to form their own impressions. We read the poem at the beginning of the lesson, but in the first reading they are merely becoming aware of them. A second reading gives them time to form them with a certain definiteness, especially if we have trained our pupils to listen with their imaginations awake. It is astonishing how much children who have been trained to listen to poetry will get from a single reading. I shall return to this later.

2nd: That the teaching of a poem need be no mere dissection, no splitting up of a beautiful thing into details in which all beauty and meaning are lost, but an attempt to realize the beauty of the whole through the details, that having found a beautiful thing we examine and pore over its minutest details that we may see how beautiful it is.

3rd: That the teaching of a poem need be no anti-climax to the reading, that, in fact, the highest point in the lesson should be reached when we finish by reading the poem again that the pupils may feel it in its full significance.

4th and lastly: That if the pupils have had the poem at an earlier stage in their career, there is no reason why the teacher should not take it again. All that they have felt and learned of the poem already, is but so much gained. On such a basis we can build with confidence. They are older now, have had more

experience of life, are ready for a deeper insight, and so we can carry their appreciation further.

I may be asked: "Are the children never to be allowed to read the poem?" Yes, surely; and now is the time; now that they have, so far as they can, felt it through and so understood it; now that they practically know it by heart; now they are in a position to try to interpret the poem by their voice. But here I would have no compulsion. I would have only those who wish to read, try, and I would have you deal gently with all who really try. I have had a little girl of ten say to me, almost in tears at her own failure, "I can feel it in the right way, but I can't get it into my voice," and this after I thought she had done it well. We want to encourage the children to try to read the poem, and young pupils will respond readily. But older pupils are too self-conscious: to some of them it is torture to be forced to read. During the poetry lesson there must be no blight on the joy. We can have days when each pupil must read a poem. But this is teaching reading aloud, and, needless to say, were it only to help the pupils to appreciate poetry, I think it ought to be done. I am only urging that we do one thing at a time, and be amply satisfied if we can do it satisfactorily. If you are teaching a poem, then be satisfied with that; teach reading at another time. I may as well take the lesson to myself: I have been teaching poetry: let me take the reading in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER VII

## HOW TO HELP THE PUPILS TO READ POETRY

I have already suggested, at the close of the last chapter, one good reason why the children should be encouraged to read poetry aloud. When we hear a good song, do we not have real pleasure in humming it over to ourselves, and, when we are alone, singing it aloud? It is better than merely thinking it over, and that for at least two reasons. When we sing it we actually hear it, and as Providence has been good enough to hide from us how poor our voices are, we experience a much finer realization of the song than anyone else who happens to hear us. But, in addition to that, the emotions and thoughts roused in us by the song are calling for expression. By singing the song we give them expression. We live the song and it goes as we would have it go, and it is a real satisfaction, a real joy to us. This is what we would have our pupils do in poetry. Here it must be admitted that the need to read aloud is not nearly so imperious as the need to sing aloud. Most of us, if we have heard a poem well read, can attain by a silent reading a much fuller realization of the poem than we can of the song by a

silent perusal of the score. And this, which is undoubtedly a gain to poetry, is also a loss; for it leads many people to forget the beauty of sound in the poetry, to forget that it is music, so that they lose more than we can well estimate. Some people, on hearing a poem well read, which they have often read silently and thought they knew, seem to awaken to a realization of all they have been missing, while, as I have said, many will not read poetry at all, though they delight in hearing it read.

If, then, our pupils are to read aloud we must give them all the help we can towards reading well. As example in this is better—much better—than precept, the teacher must do all in his power to make his reading a joy to the pupils. I have spoken of this already, but there is more to be said. I have listened to students reading to a class and said to them at the close: "Yes, you mean well, and will, I believe, do well: there was real expression, real feeling behind your reading, and the children got it; but what is wrong with you is that you cannot use your voice; I can read the poem better than you can, because I have more command of my voice, more experience in using it: I trust my voice, and so the feeling does not remain behind: you do not trust your voice: if you knew that you could express fairly well by your voice what you feel about the poem, that while you were enjoying the luxury of the sound, it would thrill along your voice and reach your pupils, you would have less hesitation about letting yourself go, you would

live the poem more intensely: you would get more home to the pupils."

The student who is in earnest about poetry will know that, if the poet is to speak to the pupils, it must be through his voice, and so he will try to prepare his voice for the poet's use. He will not wish that his pupils should hear Walter de la Mare speak with a pronounced Glasgow accent, or that Keats and Shelley should slur their words together, or that Shakespeare should be guilty of bad, slovenly, careless articulation. If the student is in earnest about poetry, I say, for, if he is, he will give to his training in phonetics the serious attention which every reader of poetry knows it deserves. I do not pretend to be an authority on voice production, so I shall keep to what I know.

The beginning of good reading lies in good speaking. If you will aim at good clear articulation in your speech, you will help yourself more than you know, and to imagine that you can become a good reader while you remain a careless, slovenly speaker is absurd. It has been pointed out by some critic that if the writer aims always at speaking as well as he can, and at expressing himself in ordinary conversation as well as he can, the practice of selecting the finer sounds, phrases, and expressions becomes almost sub-conscious, and he reaps his harvest when he sits down to write. For then, when his mind is full of his subject he is saved endless time and trouble, as the finer words and phrases come naturally to him. No singer who cares anything about singing neglects to train his voice, but

you who wish to read poetry do not make use of the opportunities you have. If you will do your best to improve your speech and will practise reading simple phrases and passages well, till it becomes a habit to give the vowel its full value and to articulate the consonants, when you come to read poetry in earnest you will find your voice an instrument on which you can play, one through which your feelings and thoughts become beautiful in sound. There is no Training College without its lecturer on Phonetics ready to give you just the training you need. I know, of course, you want to play Beethoven, but it happens to be the case that what you need is practice at scales and five-finger exercises. If your enthusiasm is worth anything you will see in these the possibility of the music of the future, and you will give to them the serious attention they deserve. Only when they have become a habit, have become your natural way of speaking, are you ready to read; for when reading poetry aloud we have time for nothing but the poem. If at that time we have to watch our pronunciation, we may read the words well, but certainly not the poem. Look at it from the point of view of the pupils. Your voice is the voice they are to hear day after day: your pronunciation is to be their authority not only during the poetry lesson, but during all lessons. You young teachers are, or should be, the missionaries of pure English to the children of the nation. Is the responsibility light? You will have, many of you, to fight an uphill battle all your lives, struggling against the influence of home

and environment, you the one monument of English spoken and read as it should be. It is not easy to over-emphasize the importance of the correctness of your pronunciation and speech.

If the teacher is taking a poem from his own anthology he will naturally be word perfect and rhythm perfect. Before we attempt to read a poem we must be absolutely word perfect. It is surely the least that can be asked by way of preparation, that we should know the words, their pronunciation and significance in the poem, that they may flow from us easily and smoothly, as if they were the natural expression of our own thoughts. Similarly we must know absolutely the rhythm of the poem, where the accent or beat falls—in short, how it goes. The rhythm is so much part of the expression of the thought that we cannot understand the poem without knowing it. How can we have felt the poem through, if our pulse has never quickened to the beat of the music? How can we really read the poem without giving full value to the rhythm? Yet when you listen to some teachers reading or teaching reading, you become convinced that the only thing you must watch is the punctuation. The punctuation, we are told, shows the meaning. What meaning, may we ask? Is it the poet's meaning? If so, why do you think he adopted the metre he did, if it was not essential to his meaning, part of his meaning? And if it was essential, do you imagine you can reproduce his meaning, without at the same time reproducing his metre? When we read, there must be no stumbling

through lines, the beat lost, and the music gone. We must so feel the metre that it will flow from us as if it were the natural beat of the music of our own thoughts. These things I might call the externals, the correctness of our speech and articulation and our knowledge of the words and the rhythm of the poem. These must be perfect, as perfect as we can make them; for if we are to live the poem, if our minds are to flow forth freely to the children, there must be no difficulties in the channels of expression.

If this is necessary for the teacher, it is just as necessary for the pupils. We must do our best to improve their speech. This, however, is not an affair of one lesson, or of one year, but of their whole school life. In addition, if we have taught the poem they should be both word perfect and rhythm perfect. What then are we to aim at in their reading? Two things, at least, let us avoid—firstly that artificial style of lifting the voice at each comma and dropping it at each period, by which the reading of a whole class becomes sterilized, void of all expression: it is neither natural nor beautiful, and reduces reading to an interpretation of punctuation: secondly, let us avoid what is sometimes, by a misuse of the word, called recitation—a method of putting in expression whether we feel it or not. We have all heard those so-called recitations, in which the speaking of a poem becomes a sort of performance, not a natural expression of what we feel. I should greatly regret if anyone should think I am attacking real recitation, or real verse-speaking.

Verse-speaking, in fact, is just what I think we should aim at. Tell the children to speak the verses; make it clear that they are to do so naturally, just as they would speak. But as they vary their own speech to suit the subject of conversation, now speaking rapidly in the excitement of telling a tale, now slowly and seriously when they have something of importance to communicate, now angrily or light-heartedly as the mood may be, so they must let their minds be full of the poem, and speak it out as if the feelings and thoughts and words were their own. Let the test of the reading be, " Is that how the poet would say it?" " Does the reading interpret the poem?" We shall have to deal later with the question, " Is poetry true to life?" Impress upon the children here that what they have to do is to speak for the poet, that they must be true to him. Get the class to criticize the reading. They are good critics, and with a little encouragement will speak out. They will tell you that the reading of A was clearer and brought out the rhythm better, but that of B had more feeling in it and expressed the meaning better. The moment children begin to criticize the reading of their comrades they are beginning to set up a standard for themselves, which they will aim at realizing when they read. More than that, they are becoming more and more conscious that the poem is clear, articulate, beautiful, expressive sound. It is good to devote a whole period occasionally to the reading of poems by the children, each being allowed to choose the poem he will read, and each being

criticized by the class. But over and above all let the teacher never forget to give his word of kindly encouragement to all who try. Let it be the teacher's motto that every child who tries, has, to some extent, succeeded. We want them to try. Attainment must be a matter of degree, but all can try, and all who try can be encouraged. In the same way the teacher should devote a period occasionally to reading what the children wish him to read. Let them choose the poems. He will soon find their favourites. What can be better than that children should wish to hear certain poems again? They are, unconsciously, building up their anthology. It is not waste of time to read to the children poems that they know. It is but making sure that those things of beauty will be a joy for ever to them. They may have little or no opportunity of hearing poetry well read when they leave school. Let, at least those poems they love get a chance of sinking into their memory.

And now, at the risk of seeming to repeat myself, I wish to say a word more on the comparative importance of reading poetry to the children and of teaching it. I fear lest the space I have devoted to the teaching of my three lessons should suggest that I think the teaching of the poem the more important, so I shall put my opinions dogmatically: the teacher ought to spend more time reading poetry than teaching it, and for every poem he teaches he ought to read about a dozen. We ought to teach a few in order that the children may see how much may be got out

of a single poem, but while the time for poetry is as limited as it is, we have only time for a few. But at all costs we must find time for reading poetry to the children. If we are really reading, the poets will say more, infinitely more, than we can say. We must remember that the children are limited to our anthology. When we teach a poem it is probable that to some members of the class this poem does not make the appeal we hope. We want to get home to them all and to insure this we must read as wide a variety of poems as possible. The important thing is that every child should hear some poems that really go home to his heart and awaken his imagination, and that poetry should appeal to the child in as many different ways as possible. Though we do not teach a poem, that does not mean that we must say nothing about it. A word or two with the children on some points in the poem will not take much time, and will help to drive them home. But let the poets speak. Lead the children into fresh fields. Take a period with Walter de la Mare, a period with Newbolt, a period with ballads, a period with a modern anthology, a period with poems they know, a period with poems from the great poets. Read each poem twice; give the children time to form their own impressions; invite them to criticize and help them in doing so. Let the poetry period be, as far as possible, a period of joy, a period of finding new and beautiful things, or of pondering over things they love already. Let them choose for themselves the poems they are to learn by heart, each

choosing his own favourites. Thus only can we develop a taste for poetry, and train their ear to the variety of beautiful sounds. Thus only can we rouse in them some idea of the wealth of poetry that lies before them. Remember that we must aim at turning out readers of poetry, not students of poetry. A few may become students of poetry, and if we detect them we can give them additional help. But the majority of our pupils will never study poetry. They might, however, be led to read it for themselves. If they can but hear sufficient poetry, so that they become familiar with its form and sound, and if they are led to associate the idea of poetry with joy, and beauty and freedom to choose, with the mystery of faery, the wonderful things of life, and the beauty of nature, if to them it is always a thing of beauty, it may remain a joy for ever. I can imagine the scorn of some teachers on reading this last sentence, but I would like to ask them: " If the poem is not a thing of beauty to you, why are you teaching it to the children? How do you propose to attain the ends for which poetry is included in the curriculum by teaching poems that you do not think beautiful? And if you think them beautiful, but cannot make them appear so to your pupils, what are we to say about your teaching? Perhaps the less the better."

This raises the endless question as to the proportion of time we ought to give to intensive and extensive reading respectively. It has been urged, not by one writer, but by many, that in school we should have

but one aim, to educate the young that they may take their place in life as men and women. They will soon enough be narrowed down to their particular trade or profession. While they are young, we ought to give them as broad an education as possible. We ought to fight, at all times, against the idea that our work is to train young clerks, or engineers, or farmers. Our aim is not to train a boy for a trade or a profession, but to prepare him for life, which is so much broader; and this demands that we should send him out with an open and alert mind, and as broad an education as possible.

But, while we claim this, do we not tend in the Secondary School to train all as if the aim of their existence were to get to the University—as if, instead of preparing our pupils to take their place as men and women in society, our one duty were to prepare young students for the University? Is Higher Grade education a preparation for life, or for one department of life only—that of the student? If it is a preparation for life, why is it that so small a percentage of the pupils who pass through the Elementary schools seem fitted to benefit by it? It cannot be the pupils who are at fault. As I understand it, the schools exist for the pupils, and if their aim is to prepare the pupils to take their place in life, well they all need preparation. It cannot be the Elementary teachers who are at fault, for they, at least, are doing their best, under the most adverse conditions, to prepare the children for what lies before them. If our Higher Grade education aims

really at carrying on this work, why, then, let the teachers in this department take up the burden.

Here we are met with the statement that it is only a small proportion of our pupils that are fitted by nature to benefit by Higher Grade education. Why put the libel on nature? Why not say frankly that our Higher Grade education is fitted to benefit only a small percentage of our pupils? Could there be any more damning criticism of our educational system? The department where the conditions under which education is carried on are the best, where the classes are the smallest, to which the most highly qualified teachers are sent, is not fitted to help the children of the nation. When they have reached the age of twelve this great department has no word for them, unless they are going to become students. I look forward to the day when Higher Grade education will be really a higher grade of education for all, and when we will not limit these teachers to preparing their pupils for one department of life only—that of the student. I want the higher grade education, with all it could give, for those who are never to become students, *because* they will never become students. I want them to get the best the Higher Grade teachers can give them; not the preparation for Leaving Certificates and Bursary Preliminary Examinations, which, seen in their true light, are but small things, but the broadening influence of further culture in Science and Mathematics, in Languages and Art, and this untrammelled by examinations and conditions; and if you tell me that

the children of the nation in general are not fitted to benefit by this, I say it is a blasphemy on human nature. I know they are not fitted for the conditions of Higher Grade education; but give me the rejected of this department and I shall take with them a play of Shakespeare, and you will see them bright and happy and intelligent. I have done it, not once, but many times. These pupils were not fitted to benefit by Higher Grade education, but they were fitted to enjoy Shakespeare.

But, let us return to things as they are, and see what is the effect of making our Higher Grade Schools forcing-beds for the University. I think I am safe in saying that not one-fifth of the pupils who enter our Higher Grade and Secondary Schools ever reach the University. The effect of this specialized training upon English is bad for the many, whatever it may be for the few. As an example, why can we not train our pupils to be readers of Shakespeare, instead of little premature students of Shakespeare? To study Shakespeare, we must first enjoy him. The first question that should be asked a class is whether they have really enjoyed the play they have read. If not, what does the teacher think he has been doing? Has he been worrying his pupils over theories and meanings, while the broad stream of Shakespeare's life flows past unnoticed? I know we must have the meanings and the theories, but we must first have the play. Put it to any critic of standing as a question of method: "Ought we not to read a play three or four times at

least and attempt to see it for ourselves, before we look at any criticism?"

Dr. Johnson in the preface to his edition of Shakespeare says:—

"Notes are often necessary, but they are necessary evils. Let him that is yet unacquainted with the powers of Shakespeare, and who desires to feel the highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every play, from the first scene to the last, with utter negligence of all his commentators. When his fancy is once on the wing, let it not stoop at correction or explanation. When his attention is strongly engaged, let it disdain alike to turn aside to the name of Theobald and of Pope. Let him read on through brightness and obscurity, through integrity and corruption; let him preserve his comprehension of the dialogue and his interest in the fable. And when the pleasures of novelty have ceased, let him attempt exactness, and read the commentators.

"Particular passages are cleared by notes, but the general effect of the work is weakened. The mind is refrigerated by interruption; the thoughts are diverted from the principal subject; the reader is weary, he suspects not why; and at last throws away the book which he has too diligently studied.

"Parts are not to be examined till the whole has been surveyed; there is a kind of intellectual remoteness necessary for the comprehension of any great work in its full design and in its true proportions; a close approach shows the smaller niceties,

but the beauty of the whole is discerned no longer."

If we are ever to see Shakespeare's work, we must learn to look straight at it through our own eyes, we must let him speak straight to us, and when we know what he says, when we are familiar with the plot and the characters, we turn to the cri ic to hear what he has to say. And this is not only the way to be just to Shakespeare; it is the only way to be just to the critic. Only when we have become familiar with the play and tried our own critical judgment upon it, are we capable of appreciating the work of the critic. Then these flashes of imaginative insight which characterize all great criticism come like revelations of the soul of the play, and we stand astonished; for who knows what further deeps lie to be revealed? It is as when a friend whom we have known, and liked, and measured, at some critical moment, shows a fineness of spirit, a depth of soul, beyond anything that we have plumbed, and we look at him with wonder, and with a new and deeper love. I know I shall be told that this is all very well, but that we have not time for it in school. What, then, have we time for? If we have not time to teach the play in the right way, have we time in our educational scheme to teach it in the wrong way? Are the theories about the play more important than the play itself? Are we to agree that " The play's the thing ", of course, but, as we have so little time, are we to read it, and while we read it, give the pupils the point of view? And so, before they have had time to see the play with their own eyes,

they are being shown it through the eyes of Coleridge, Dowden, Bradley, Raleigh—a practice which is wholly bad; a practice which these critics would wholeheartedly condemn; a practice for which even its exponents have nothing to say, except that it helps the pupils through the " Higher ". We ought to read and enjoy with them as much of Shakespeare as possible. As in the short poem, a certain amount of intensive work must be done to show the pupils how to tackle a play for themselves, and get most out of it; but, above all things, we must read, and read widely, in Shakespeare, making it our aim, not that they should know about him, but that they should love his plays. In this way we will broaden their view of life, familiarize them with many of the finest things in literature, and, above all, help them to become readers of Shakespeare. The general reader rarely ventures into this field. He may have studied a little in it in school, and he regards it as too full of difficulties, as a field for the student—as if Shakespeare wrote for students and not for men and women! They have not been taught either to trust him or themselves. And yet there is no more delightful book in English for the general reader than the book of Shakespeare's plays. As for preparing the young students for the University, I wonder what the Professors of English in our Universities would say—whether they would not be entirely satisfied if they found that their students had read widely and enjoyed Shakespeare in school: whether this would not form the best background for

the work they wish to do. If the boy is going to be a student, surely there will be plenty of time for him to discuss the theories after he leaves school. He will be more mature, capable of coming to some decision, instead of merely accepting what is thrust upon him; and this would allow the others, to whom the theories mean so little, but to whom the plays might mean so much, to get the plays. For how many of our pupils who will never become students of Shakespeare might this mean the beginning of a lifelong friendship with the plays themselves?

And so it is with the short poem. The field of our reading can hardly be too wide. Most children spend at least eight years in school. Think what might be accomplished even in the limited time allowed to poetry, what a wealth of lyrics and ballads the children might have heard, how full their own little anthologies might be, if we would but realize how precious a thing it is for them to have enjoyed poetry and found there not only beauty but truth.

I have remarked above on the importance of training children to listen with their imaginations awake. There are various methods of testing how much the children can gather at one reading, and some people urge that, unless the children feel that they are going to be questioned or tested, they will not pay sufficient attention. To this I can but reply that, if they do feel that they are going to be questioned and tested, they will not listen to poetry in the right way. Put it to any student who has had to read a certain amount of

poetry for an examination, whether the thought of the questions that might be asked, and the doubt as to whether he would remember all the points, did not rob the poetry of part, if not of all, its joy. To allow this to occur in school is to defeat the very end we have in view in teaching poetry. If the child is to enjoy, he must listen with an untroubled mind. We want the critical intellect asleep for the moment, that the field may be clear for the receptive imagination. The freer the child's mind is, the more he is likely to receive, and—as he can criticize only what he has received—the better he will be able to criticize. Some teachers do not seem to understand that you cannot have the receptive imagination and the critical intellect both in the field at the one time if either is to do its best work—that the one supplies the material for the other—that we can criticize only what we have felt, and so understood, of the poem.

The things that boys give their most serious attention to, are those they do for pleasure—their games and recreations of all kinds, including such forms of recreation as reading, stamp-collecting, and so on. Practically the same may be said for men. To nothing do they give such whole-hearted devotion as to their games, except it be that, to many, the game of life becomes the most interesting of all games. All education, in this sense, should be play—something that the children enter into with pleasure. Otherwise we can never have their serious attention. It cannot be forced from them. It is something which they alone

can give, but which they do give, at once, and without thought, when the subject is put before them in the right way. People talk of the demoralizing effect of making the school a place of enjoyment. But this is a mere confusion of thought. The school is a place for work. If, however, we are to get the best work out of the child, he must be happy in his work. There is all the difference in the world between seeking for pleasure, and seeking for something and finding our pleasure in the keenness of the search. Watch a boy who is fond of Rugby, or a keen chess-player, during the game, and ask what sort of play this is? Is it not as serious as life itself? This is the kind of play we wish education to be; for here the imagination needs no awakening, and the best training it can have is but sufficient exercise in the game. This is what I have been aiming at in all I have written above. If the teacher loves the poem, so that his reading is a joy to the children, his voice will awaken their imaginations. If the land of poetry has become for them the " Land of Heart's Desire ", where the boy's love of adventure and the girl's love of faery can be equally well satisfied, where they have already found much that delighted them, and into which they can adventure with the confident hope of finding more, what need we trouble about their imaginations? All the training they need is to be taken back frequently enough to the land of poetry. That is how to train them, not only to listen, but—what is just as important—to adventure for themselves into this land. I shall return

to this when I take up the question of the child's anthology; but, in closing this chapter, I should like to give one experience I had of this extensive reading. For a year and a half while I was head of the English Department in a Secondary school, I carried on a reading club of advanced pupils. We met one evening per week. During that time I read with them the whole of *The Ring and the Book*, over 21,000 lines in length, and sixteen plays of Shakespeare.

# CHAPTER VIII

## BEAUTY IS TRUTH

In an earlier chapter I have pointed out that the first qualification for the teacher of poetry is that he should love it for its beauty. I would now add that the second qualification is that he should believe in its truth. Much of our teaching suffers from the fact that the teacher has no real belief, no living faith in the truth of what he teaches. Probably he has never thought out the question, never tested it, never even doubted it, because he has never really believed it. We appreciate this at once, when we think of the difference there so often is between the teaching of one of Euclid's propositions and a poem. In the former the teacher knows definitely the truth of what he is teaching and works, therefore, with confidence and decision. On the other hand, to many, the poem seems an unreal thing beside it, a beautiful pleasant thing, but lacking in the grip of truth which is so pronounced in the other. And yet, what is the truth of poetry? "Poetry . . . sits close to life, and like a well-fitting garment displays its form and members."[1]

[1] Professor Macneile Dixon, *Tragedy*.

Herein lies the difficulty. It depends upon the character of the teacher, or upon his view of life, whether he can perceive the truth of poetry or not; for the man's view of life is a revelation of the man himself. If, to him, there is no music in the world, it is because he has no ear for music. If art has no charm for him, we do not blame art. If philosophy has no appeal, we do not think philosophy lacking. If, as to Peter Bell,

> " A primrose by the river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him
> And it was nothing more ",

we do not feel that nature has failed, but recall to our minds that to Wordsworth the same primrose could give

> " Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears ".

There is truth, great truth, in Coleridge's words:

> " Ah! lady, we receive but what we give
> And in our life alone does nature live."

But, if we accept all this, we should be prepared to go a little further. If, in human life, a man can see neither beauty nor greatness, nothing lovable and nothing worthy of trust, we should remember that his view of life is but the mirror of himself, that why he fails to find these in others is that they do not exist in himself. Think of the man who is called " cute ": the man who is never taken in: who never makes the mistake of trusting anyone, because, there being nothing

worthy of trust in his contemptible soul, he can see none in the world. Think also of the man who calls himself blasé, and prides himself in it, forgetting that the measure of a man is the measure of what he can drink from life's cup with unquenched thirst: put him beside Tennyson's picture of Ulysses with his thirst for life—

> "I would drink life to the lees",

or Kipling's

> "For to admire an' for to see,
> For to behold this world so wide—
> It never done no good to me,
> But I can't drop it if I tried!"

and we feel how shallow he is. He has taken his little sip, and thinks he has drained the cup. It is natural that he should think life as shallow as himself. Life has not lost its zest because he is blasé! Life does not fail. It is ever there, full of power and passion, and beauty and sorrow, and sin, the cancer of the soul, and love, infinite in its reach, and simple human trust, that makes a face so beautiful, and courage that glorifies a man: and, brooding over all, the mystery that allures the soul, but never satisfies it. It is to this life that poetry is true, and the great poets are among that small band of men who, gifted with eyes that see, have looked with souls athirst for truth into the face of life and found there all that could satisfy the spirit except that for which the spirit yearns most—the

solution of life's mystery. Think of the great dramatists of Greece. After more than two thousand years, their picture of life still stands as one of the great and unsurpassable wonders of art. For example, let the student read Murray's translation of Euripides' *Trojan Women*, and he will find there a picture in which love and beauty and pain are so blended, that he will rejoice almost in tears over the wonder of human life. Or let him wander through Dante's *Inferno*—a journey which no man of open mind can take and come back unchanged. Yet these he will read only in translations, and the translators are the first to tell us that, in losing the original language, " that large utterance of the early gods ", our loss is almost incalculable. Turn to our own literature. It is universally admitted that in the rôle of England's great men there are none greater than her poets, and that of these the greatest is Shakespeare; and what his critics have praised in him perhaps more than anything else, is his complete sanity. His dramas are true to life—truer than anything else that has been written in English. We have in him the greatest mind of our race, looking with clear eyes, undimmed by any theories, straight at life. Do you wish to know about human life, its " power and potency ", its laughter and despair? You will get more from him than from anyone. Or turn to Milton, and learn in *Paradise Lost* the meaning of the sublime. Goethe, in his *Wilhelm Meister*, put as, perhaps, the greatest thing in education, the inculcation of the spirit of

Reverence. If we do not feel it in our own hearts, how are we to help our pupils? Can we live with Shakespeare's *Lear*, or Milton's *Satan*, can we breathe, for a time, their mighty life without learning our own littleness? But come to a lower level and nearer to our own times. Do you wish to feel the truth about the great controversy of last century, when science seemed to be undermining the foundations of faith, and the more serious minds of our people were stirred to their depths? Go neither to the scientists, nor to the defenders of Religion, nor yet to the philosophers. These all can, and do, contribute to our knowledge. But if you wish to *feel* the truth go to Tennyson, Arnold, and Browning. There you will see and feel the human life of the time, in its agony, its aspirations, and its triumph. You cannot read, for instance, those three great passages in *In Memoriam*, liv, lv, lvi, or xxxiii, or xcvi, without feeling the entire sincerity with which Tennyson faces the problem, acknowledging that the advance of science has imperilled his faith, his indignant repudiation of its conclusions as not only incapable of satisfying the spirit, but as a travesty of the meaning of life, his longing, almost to despair, for some firm foothold in the quicksands of doubt and his clinging to his faith. Of how many sincere souls was that the story last century? We pass to Matthew Arnold, and look at life through his disillusioned eyes. Many young men feel, at the moment when faith yields to doubt, and they pass into what seem the arid fields

of agnosticism, that Matthew Arnold brings peace to their souls: that the strength and dignity and beauty and infinite reach of the spirit that he yet finds in nature and human nature come like new life and hope to them; and they welcome his cry:

> " Was Christ a man like us? *Ah! let us try*
> *If we then, too, can be such men as he!*"

and rejoice that at times to them also, as to him, in spite of the river of doubt on which they float,

> " —The night-wind
> Brings up the stream
> Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea."

We pass again to Browning, and breathe his strong optimism, his confidence that life means strife to attain an ideal—an ideal which is unattainable, a strife then that is doomed to failure—but that this is the success and triumph of life; for this shows that life on earth is, in itself, a thing incomplete: that to attempt to judge it as if it were complete is like judging the man while yet an apprentice, while yet a learner, and before he has had the opportunity, by putting out his power on life, of showing the potency that is in him.

> " Leave now for dogs and apes,
> Man has Forever."

Are we to treat the work of such spirits as something pleasant and beautiful, but lacking in reality and truth? Are we to treat them as if they ministered

to our idler, less serious moods? Are we to take poetry as many people take their religion, as a matter of Church observance, a social affair which occupies Sunday and leaves them free to go their own way for the rest of the week—as if religion, real religion, could be separated from life? We are so cold-blooded now that we have lost all sympathy with passion. The deeds that society condemns are those which men commit when blinded by the mist of passion. And it is well that they should be condemned, for we ought to be able to control ourselves. But we should remember that passion is the very flame of life, that it burns both to purify and to destroy, that it is the same passion, differently directed, which lifts man at one time to the gates of Heaven and, at another, conducts him to the gates of Hell. But, while we condemn the sins of passion, we condone the cold-blooded hypocrisy of those who make of religion a social decency, or, worse than that, affect religion because it is good business, it pays—those

> " Who, never naming God except for gain,
> So never took that useful name in vain ",

or, worst of all, these self-righteous shining lights who live for the letter and do their best to kill the spirit of religion. Just so with poetry. The teacher too often lives in a world of prose. He thinks himself a man of experience, one who knows too much to take poetry seriously. His early enthusiasms and ideals have all faded. You will hear him jibe at the enthusiasm of

young ones and remark, with a shrug of the shoulders: " We have had these ideals too." He is merely making public his own failure, for ideals that will not stand the test of life, that cannot be carved into act,

" Are shadows, not substantial things ".

The test of love is to find itself in the monotonous and harassing details of life. It is perhaps the most difficult thing the young teacher has to learn, that the task for him is to see the ideal in the details of his work, in the correction of exercises just as much as in the reading of poetry. I tell my students that it is easy to begin with enthusiasm, but the race of life is long. They all get off the mark with plenty of go, and there is a fine rush to begin with. Some soon begin to sag and drop out. Others hold on for a bit. A few endure to the end. And those who are readiest to laugh at the enthusiasm of the beginners are just those who sagged and dropped out in the first round of their own race. They who have lived a life of prose, who see neither beauty nor wonder in the sunset, and to whom the coming of spring is a commonplace, who are they to teach poetry? In teaching, a man's ideal is tried and tested in every way. But, if he is a man, he will win through to the end, his ideal changed no doubt, or it would have died, for life means change; but changed because it has lived and developed, has found its nurture in life, its realization there. I have heard teachers, many a time, condemn the clergy for not living up to their profession. Let criticism, like charity, begin at

home. What profession makes higher claims for itself than ours? These claims are our ideal, our profession of faith. Do our utmost, we shall not attain. More than that, when we are doing our utmost we alone shall know how far we are from attaining. For a profession such as ours asks the whole of a man, and our motto should be, " If, with all your hearts, ye truly seek me, ye shall ever surely find me." " But," I shall be asked, " is not this making a kind of religion of teaching?" Well, what else is it? What else is any real work? If education is taken in its right sense, can anything be more sacred to us than the education of our children? But if we are so desperately in earnest as this, will it not tend to make the teaching too serious and cast a sort of gloom over the school? Why should it? A religion that is worthy of the name must live in all that is good in life. If it cannot find itself in the humour as in the pathos of life, in the joy as in the sorrow, in the little things as in the great, it but shows its own weakness, its own limited nature. A religion that would tend to crush the happy joyous laughter of children would stand self-condemned. We teachers agree readily enough about this, but what about our own teaching, if it does likewise? It is not the spirit I am advocating that will do this, for it is a spirit, not of self-sacrifice, but of self-realization, of finding ourselves in our work by seeking there our ideal. If you are seeking to find in your work the joy and meaning of life, if with all your hearts ye truly seek it, your pupils shall ever surely find it there. How can

it be otherwise? They will find in your work what you seek there. It is that careless empty attitude towards work which I have condemned, that spirit which finds its only joys in play or recreation outside its work; this it is which casts a gloom on the school and makes even of poetry a dull empty dead thing. In the teaching of poetry I would hope for that spirit which we find sometimes in truly religious people. They do not talk much about religion or the church, but there seems to breathe from them a spirit of serene faith that finds its work and its religion in all around. It is the confidence in the truth of poetry, that does not show itself in assertion and discussion, but in an attitude to poetry and life, a quiet confidence that the beauty of poetry is not a fanciful imaginary picture too fine to be true to life, but that this beauty is the truth of life, and that it is for us to find it in life, this is the ideal spirit for the teachers of poetry. I know that you will find some who teach thus, who have never gone into the question of the truth of poetry, who seem unaware even of its existence;

> " Glad Hearts! without reproach or blot
> Who do thy work, and know it not."

But do not let us assume that we are among them. We must guard this faith from the scepticism of the shallow, by keeping in touch with the great minds in poetry, by not merely reading but living the great plays and poems we love. When doubt is cast on our faith we need not argue in support of it. Our faith is not founded on

argument, but on experience. To renew our faith we have but to go once more to the well of poetry and drink. If you are a lover of Shakespeare, go to him when your faith is attacked. In his presence doubt cannot live. Is it Shelley or Keats you love? At the sound of their music your doubt will fade away. The value of this faith to the teacher in his work it is not easy to estimate. I have said earlier that in teaching poetry the teacher must remember that life will breed life and death, death. It is just a question of life or death. If your attitude to poetry is right it will breed the same attitude in your pupils. Poetry will become for them one of the real things of life. The importance of this in the education of the children, and in their after life, is to be measured by the importance of poetry in the life of our nation.

I have stated in an earlier chapter that in poetry, as in all art, we reach truth through beauty, and that if we do not appreciate the beauty of a poem we cannot get its truth. It is right then that the child should approach the truth of poetry in the natural way. During his earlier years he should be like a child gathering flowers with no thought but for their beauty. No question of the truth of poetry should be introduced until the child is of an age to feel that this somehow adds to its beauty, brings poetry out of a sort of happy fairyland and shows it, with all its beauty, to be an inhabitant of our own world. While the child's greatest happiness in poetry lies in dreaming, let him dream. In one way there are no truer inhabitants of the land

of poetry than those little dreamers, and many of them when they awaken to life will never find poetry so real again. It is in these early years that the teacher's attitude to poetry is of most importance. Knowing the child's land of dreams, it is easy, without ever seeming to bring the cold light of reality into this world, to show how often the dreams are like real life. In fact, if the teacher's attitude is consistently right the experience of the child will be that of a dream come true, as his land of dreams gradually takes substance and reality in the growing appreciation that the beauty is true to life.

" ——All this, how far away!
Mere delectation, meet for a minute's dream!" [1]

And yet, why should it be so? It is generally admitted that the beginners in a subject need most individual attention, that as they advance and get to know more they can do more for themselves. In addition, it is generally admitted that the first steps must be taken with great care. Otherwise they may go entirely wrong, and may not only have to begin again, but have to try to forget what has been learned, that they may begin anew. If this be so, apply it to our schools. The pupils in the Elementary department, not only because they are the beginners but also because they are so young that they cannot be expected to do much for themselves, evidently need most

[1] BROWNING, *The Ring and the Book*—Giuseppe Caponsacchi, ll. 2096–7.

individual attention from their teachers. Similarly as the children in this department have to take their first steps in most of those subjects which they will study right through their school career, at no time is the teaching more important. In addition, this is the only department through which pass all the children of the nation. There seems to be every reason why special attention ought to be given to this department. And what do we find? The young children who can do least for themselves, who depend most upon their teachers, are herded into classes so large that individual attention is almost impossible, and frequently taught under conditions that make education almost impossible. It is in such surroundings, where often indeed the truth does not seem beautiful, that the teachers in the elementary and advanced divisions have to attempt to impress on their pupils that beauty is truth. To many the circumstances are so discouraging—the ugly room, the noisy street, the ragged children—that the early enthusiasm fades away and work becomes a drudgery. Yet where will the teacher's love for poetry get a better chance, or where is it more needed? It is in circumstances like these that the teacher's confidence in the truth of poetry is of so great importance. Is there to be poetry in the life of these little ones? Look for it and you will find it there. Take, for example, Laurence Binyon's poem, *The Little Dancers*.[1] He has not idealized the street, the tavern, the ugly surroundings. But look

[1] See *Poems of To-day*, First Series.

at the two little girls, dancing to the music of the barrel-organ,

"Their eyes shining, grave with a perfect pleasure".

Is that not poetry, the poetry of life? Is beauty not truth to them, at least while they dance? To such pupils more than to any the teacher of poetry has a mission. Putting aside all educational theories, in the plain light of our duty as teachers to the children, where the need is most, there we should give most: where there is least external beauty, there we need most the beauty of the spirit. But as the most highly qualified teachers of English are all for the Higher Grade Department the Elementary and Advanced Division teachers must take the post as they always have done. But let it be noted that, whatever society may say, this is the post of honour: here the need is most; here there is most work to be done: here the reward—not the pay, but the real reward—is the greatest. We teachers of poetry are apt to be repelled at times by the character of these pupils. They seem coarse, vulgar, lacking in all fineness of appreciation. What chance have they had? Think of the circumstances and the environment in which many of them live. What fineness of appreciation would you expect to live and develop under such conditions? And you—why have you been sent here, but to try to bring a little of that fineness and good taste and beauty into the lives of the children; and to get your narrow soul broadened a bit? What is the use of your faith in the

truth of poetry if it cannot live and give light here, where most it is needed? Try poetry on these children. See what a wonderful response they give, how they leap up to the light. There is no reward the teacher gets comparable to his share in the delight of these little hearts. But how if he have no light to give? These children have so few chances in life, and one of these chances lies in the character of the teacher they get. Will he bring into their lives light and happiness and a sense of something finer in life than they are accustomed to, or will he accept with a grudge the fact that he should have been sent to spend his talents upon such children as these, and get through the day's " darg " as he must, one more cloud on the sky where there are too many already? Only if the belief in the truth of poetry is a living faith in him can he do the work that lies before him. But who can measure the value of that work? I speak here for my own subject only and, at present, only for a branch of it. But the same applies to all subjects. We have all seen this beautiful work being done at times, now in one subject, now in another, and wondered at what was accomplished. The world does not see the fruits of it, cannot measure their value, and so disregards it. But the so-called world does the same for all real work, and no real worker expects anything else of it. He finds the joy of life in his work, his reward in the joy of doing it. If more were needed he would find it in the appreciation of his pupils. All teachers, who have enjoyed their work, must have felt how great this

is and how often in after years, and more than they ever could deserve, they receive from them tributes of gratitude and affection that " overpay all labours and anxieties ". Let me put it once again for my own subject. Let the teacher face, definitely, the question: " What is the value of poetry in the life of our nation?" and remember that that is also the value of his work. What these children will be as men and women depends, to a certain extent, upon how he regards his work, and the manner in which he devotes himself to it. Upon this also depends what his own life will be —what he will find in it. If he does not seek, he will not find.

As a conclusion to this chapter I shall sketch briefly a lesson I have taught occasionally to advanced pupils, though it could be modified easily to suit pupils of from fourteen to fifteen years of age. The aim of the lesson is to bring before pupils, deliberately, the question of the truth of poetry. Two or three questions generally suffice to draw from the pupils the fact that while they like poetry, and think it beautiful, they do not think of it as true. They will tell you that it is " imaginary " or that it belongs to the world of imagination. I then propose to them that we have a discussion; that I shall try to prove that poetry is as true to ordinary human life as mathematics, if they will take the other side; and the boys, at least, generally accept the challenge with eagerness. We begin with arithmetic. The proof then goes thus—1 and 1 make 2. I am one and this boy here is one. Add us and you get 2. But 2

is the double of 1. If you add us are we the double of one—by the way, of which one? Are we double the weight, double the value, can we do double the work in the same time, or in what sense are we the double of one? As this question is, generally, too difficult to answer we take another example, two desks. But here it is easy to show that they are not exactly the same weight—in fact, not exactly the same in any way. Once again we fail to add them. I now produce two pennies. What about these? Again they admit that in size, weight, composition, they are not exactly the same. But, when I ask " Is there nothing in which these two pennies are exactly the same? I get the answer " In value ". It is easy to show that this does not mean they consist of the same amount of alloy; more than that, the alloy itself is not of the value of a penny. Where then is the value? We give it to the penny, but it really exists in our imagination. It is a sort of imaginary quality we attach to the coin and we show this at once by producing a bank-note. " Yes," I say, " but was not this just the fault you were finding with poetry?" Turn to Euclid. Here it does not take long to show that points which have position but not magnitude, lines which have length but not breadth, are also imaginary. " Yes," I ask, " but are they any the worse for belonging to the world of imagination?" A boy takes his knife and a piece of wood and, after working at it for some time, shapes a little boat. What governed all the boy's actions, as he worked with the wood? Was it not the picture he had in his imagination

of the boat he wished to shape? Can you call this unreal, which seems to govern and control what we call real? Take the example of a young man with an ideal; show how it governs his whole life and may lead him, in the end, willingly to accept death for its sake. Can we call this unreal? Are not our ideals perhaps the most real things in life—and where do they exist if not in the imagination? Here I let the discussion stop with a few words on the truth of mathematics, lest any pupil should be misled, and pass to the next step of the lesson. The text here may be put in the words of Professor Dixon:—" It is the office of the imagination to tell the truth." [1] I tell them of one or two great scientific discoveries, pointing out that, generally, it is impossible to put down the final step to anything but a flash of imagination. I apply it to a deduction in Euclid and ask them how the solution comes. After we have familiarized ourselves with the details of the problem and turned them over in our mind, is it not a flash of imagination that shows us the solution, and we cry, " I see it"? But, if our solution be wrong, what then? We soon prove it to be so, and it does not stand. If it be right, it stands examination. " Yes," we say, " it is the office of the imagination to tell the truth." And now, we pass to poetry. I remind them that my original contention was that poetry was true to life (putting aside the comparison with arithmetic which was introduced only to arouse interest in the point) and propose that we examine certain

[1] Professor Macneile Dixon, *Tragedy*.

poems and test them from this point of view. But here a question arises at once. " If the poet wrote the poem he must have thought it true to life; it must have been true for him." I remind them of our deduction from Euclid. What about our attempts at solving it? If they were right, they could bear examination; if they were wrong we could soon prove them so. Just so the poet; his picture may be wrong, and, if so, examination will show it. But another question arises, " Are we as good judges of what is true to life as the poets?" Surely not; but there are poets and poets; and we must not forget this important point about poetry, that if after careful examination, we feel that a thing is not true to life, it cannot be true for us. If it be not true for us, there is nothing to be gained by pretending that it is. If we are to enjoy poetry at all, we must first be sincere. The fault may be ours, or it may be the poet's, but, at any rate, the poem is not a good poem for us. Now, let us try one. I read the following poem by Moore:

" At the mid hour of night, when stars are weeping, I fly
To the lone vale we loved, when life shone warm in thine eye;
And I think oft, if spirits can steal from the regions of air
To revisit past scenes of delight, thou wilt come to me there
And tell me our love is remember'd, even in the sky!

" Then I sing the wild song it once was rapture to hear
When our voices, commingling, breathed like one on the ear;

And as Echo far off through the vale my sad orison
rolls,
I think, O my love! 'tis thy voice, from the Kingdom of
Souls
Faintly answering still the notes that once were so dear."

Is the poem true to life? Before we can answer the question we must decide how the poet means us to take the poem. There seem to be three possible ways of taking it; it may represent a dream, meaning that at the midnight hour I fly in my dreams to the lone vale, or it may represent a waking dream, meaning that at the mid hour of night I fly in my imagination, in spirit, to the lone vale; or it may represent an actual experience, meaning that at the mid hour of night I actually go to the lone vale. (I may say that each of these has been suggested at different times, when we were discussing the poem.) I read the poem again that they may have time to turn the question over. We decide that the first is not satisfactory; that he is not merely telling us that he goes there in dreams, but that she does not appear; and that the best things in the poem would lose their force if we thought of it as a dream. The second seems not much better; if he goes only in imagination to the lone vale, how could she come to him there, when he is not there? (see lines 3–5 of the first verse). Lines 4–5 of the second verse also seem to lose their force if he does not actually hear the echo. We decide then for the third view, and now turn to the main question of its truth to life. What is this lover's custom after the death of his mistress?

He sets out at midnight for the lone vale. Is the moon shining? We do not know, but it certainly cannot be bright, as the stars seem to be bright. How do you know? He says " When the stars are weeping." Why are they weeping? Is " weeping stars " good? We decide that this is a bad example of the so-called pathetic fallacy. Picture him hastening to the lone vale in the darkness. When he arrives, what does he do? There in the lone vale, at midnight, under the weeping stars, he sings the wild song. We decide that this will not do, that Tom Moore may have behaved thus, but that it does not ring true to life. Put two lines of real poetry beside it, such as:—

" The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine ",

and it seems to shrivel up, or take the second verse of *Mary Morison*:—

" Yestreen when to the trembling string
The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,—
I sat, but neither heard nor saw:
Tho' this was fair, and that was braw,
And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sigh'd, and said amang them a',
' Ye are na Mary Morison ",

and we feel how true the one is beside the other. Now, both these poems are in the *Golden Treasury*, and both are in the Oxford Book. Moore's poem then was approved both by Palgrave and Quiller-Couch. But

Moore's poem does not seem good to us. It seems merely a piece of pretty sentimental verse, and so we will not put it in our anthology. We may be wrong, but, at least, this is the truth for us. We will try another. I read Tennyson's poem *The Captain—a Legend of the Navy* beginning:—

"He that only rules by terror".

After analysing it we decide that it will not do either—that it does not ring true: though we would not willingly lose the last picture in this poem, as it, at least, is both beautiful and true:—

"There the sunlit ocean tosses
O'er them mouldering,
And the lonely sea-bird crosses
With one waft of the wing.

We try again, taking *O my Luve's like a red, red rose*, and stop to discuss the lines,

"And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry:

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun."

Is this true to life? What does it mean? Let us suppose that his lady says to him, "How long will you love me?" what is the lover to say? To him his love feels infinite, and how can he express the infinite but by the impossible? So he replies by the four lines above,

and if she says, " But that will never be," he would reply, " That is true, my dear. I will love you till then." Yes, this rings absolutely true to life. That the pupils may understand how a line rings true to one, and may ring false to another, I quote the line:—

" Her eyes like twin stars shining ",

and ask for the figure of speech. They give me Simile. I then tell them that once, when discussing figures of speech with a class of boys, I quoted this line, and they put it down as hyperbole, declaring and maintaining that it was an exaggeration. I conclude this lesson by reading poem after poem from my own anthology, illustrating different sides of life, pointing out how often the very beat of the poem gives it a truth that prose could not have. For instance, in reading *How they brought the good news from Ghent to Aix*, I take the line,

" And into the midnight we galloped abreast ",

and turn it into prose thus, " And, keeping abreast, we rode hard into the darkness ", pointing out that while the horses gallop through the line of poetry, in the prose we have lost the beat of their hooves. Similarly, take this line:

" The ploughman homeward plods his weary way ",

and re-write it thus: " The ploughman tramps wearily home." We no longer hear the heavy footsteps of the ploughman, as we hear them in the poetry, for we have

lost not only the beat, but the effect of the alliteration in *ploughman plods*, *weary way*. The very line seems heavy and weary. On the other hand, in the mock-heroic, the humorous effect often lies entirely in the contrast between the sound and the sense:

> " Dashed the bold fork through pies of pork,
> " O'er hard boiled eggs the saltspoon shook."

By far the most important part of this lesson is given above in one sentence, that beginning, " I conclude this lesson by reading poem after poem from my own anthology." The rest of the lesson is a mere introduction to this. It may seem long, but it does not take long with the class. As we are putting the poets on their defence, an introduction is necessary that the whole class may grasp the point at issue. The real lesson begins when we let the poets speak for themselves.

# CHAPTER IX

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I wish to draw the student's attention to four things, all of which have their importance in the teaching of poetry, but which have not yet found a place: prosody, biography, criticism, and the child's anthology.

In the Elementary and Intermediate Departments, I think prosody, except in its simplest form, should be left alone. I do not see how such terms as anapæst and amphibrach, acatalectic and hypercatalectic, can have any real significance for them, or can add, in any way, to their pleasure in poetry. But the beat of the line they must know, and their attention can be drawn to this from the earliest days. When they can repeat "Mary had a little lamb," they can tell, at once, how many beats there are in the line. It is strange how often we find pupils who cannot mark the accented syllables, but who read the line correctly. Write a number of lines of different metres on the board. Ask the pupils to copy them out and put an acute accent over each accented syllable. An examination of the papers generally gives some strange results. Ask a pupil to

read aloud from the board one of the lines he has marked wrongly and often you find that he reads it correctly. Read to him then the line as he has marked it, and he laughs at his own attempt. A little regular practice at this is important, as it helps him to find the beat when he reads a new poem for the first time, and thus makes it easier for him to get the music of the line. Similarly, the child should be taught to write out the scheme of rhyme. Children in the Elementary Department will do this readily. We do not want to distract their attention in any way while we are reading, or teaching the poem, but time should be taken occasionally to examine a number of poems they know to discuss the different metres and rhymes. They should then be directed to a number of new poems, and asked to mark the accents and write out the rhyme-schemes. I think the children ought to practise these, and attend to them carefully, that the day may sooner come when they will feel them without needing to attend to them—when they will have become part of that indefinable charm which, for want of a better word, I call the meaning of the poem. It is wonderful how keen and quick their ear becomes with a little practice. A student had just finished a lesson to a class of girls on Walter de la Mare's *The children magic hath stolen away*. I asked the class to listen to my reading of the poem, and tell me how they liked it. I read the first verse clearly and distinctly, with attention to the metre, but, as far as possible, taking all the magic out of the verse, and putting in its place

a spirit of bright cheerfulness. The girls laughed at me. What struck me was that they all laughed, and laughed so merrily. They were all genuinely amused, and when they could not get suitable words to express their condemnation of my reading, they told me it had not the right kind of music.

The practice I have been referring to helps the children to hear the music when poetry is being read to them, but its real importance is felt only when the children begin to read poetry for themselves. Then it is all-important that they should get the music of the poem at once, or they may be discouraged. This makes poetry much more easy to read, and much more attractive on a first reading. Let the teacher remember that his aim is to turn out readers of poetry, and he will understand the importance of anything which will help his pupils when they have left school, and when the only poetry they will get will be what they read for themselves.

Biography I should exclude altogether, except in so far as it helps the children to understand the poetry. The poet himself published his poems, gave them to the world, as the part of himself worth knowing. Where certain facts of his life help us to a better understanding of his poems, these I would give to the children. I think, for instance, that a certain amount of biography would be helpful in reading Burns, Scott, and Wordsworth. Remember, however, that it is poetry we have to teach. If we can take the biography at some other time the children may get many an

interesting story from the lives of the poets. But some teachers seem to think that the most important thing is that the pupils should know about the poet. The important thing is that the children should have a definite feeling for his poetry. If you really love the poet you can be trusted to select. About one thing at least we may be dogmatic. We must never bring before the children these facts in the life of the poet which he himself would gladly have hidden. To do so seems to me an absolute indelicacy—an intrusion upon the poet's private life. I have no sympathy with those who state that the biographer should tell everything. To begin with, he cannot, however careful his researches. But he may succeed in digging up certain facts that show how weak the poet could be. What of them? If we are to judge, we are told, we must know the whole facts, and so we cheerfully burrow in the garbage to find the truth of the poet there. It is so easy for us to sink with him, if it means sinking, but so difficult to rise with him to his heights. The tendency is another revelation of the self. We look for ourselves in the poet's life, and find ourselves either in the weakness of the man, or in the greatness of the poet. When you hear a man say that the children ought to be shown that, after all, the poet was a man like ourselves, do you not instinctively feel that, at any rate, the poet was never a man like him? If we are to judge! Who are we to judge such men as the poets? How can we stand before the beauty of their work, the truth they reveal that gives life a new meaning,

and feel anything but reverence? And these works were not the greatest things in them. "When composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet." [1]

> "Thoughts hardly to be packed
> Into a narrow act,
> Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
> All I could never be,
> All, men ignored in me,
> This, I was worth to God." [2]

Let the child at least see the poet through his poems.

As to criticism, this word is so often misunderstood, that the teacher ought to make clear to the pupils, from the beginning, that the true work of the critic of poetry is to find the beauty and the truth in it. What better lesson can there be for the children, or for the teacher himself, than to realize that the critic, whether of poetry or of life itself, has one duty, one ideal, to find the beauty and the truth in it, the heart and the soul of it; that though, at times, he may have to point out faults, he does this through no love of fault-finding, but for love of truth, that the truth, in its beauty, may shine more clearly? The one who loves fault-finding, who delights in pointing out the weakness of others, shows clearly the pettiness of his own spirit: he never reaches the heart of things: he

[1] SHELLEY, *Defence of Poetry*. [2] BROWNING, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.

is never admitted into the company of the great poets. His one interest is to show that they are men like himself; he looks for himself in them, and finds himself in their weaknesses. But the true critic, striving to realize the beauty and the truth, and putting aside the faults that he may get nearer to the heart of things, lives in the company of the great, and finds himself in their greatness. It is easy to find faults, even in the greatest poets—in Shakespeare and Milton; but who can rise to the heights from which they survey human life? The teacher ought to impress upon the pupils that the measure of their own greatness is what they can find in life, that the measure of their own poetic ability is what they can find in poetry, that, for instance, the child who feels keenly the beauty in Masefield's *Sea Fever* has something of the poet himself in him. Let the teacher take the lesson to himself as a guide in his daily work. How often, for instance, does the correction of compositions degenerate into mere fault-finding, the marking of mistakes, the teacher forgetting that his aim ought to be to encourage and stimulate the young writers by pointing out to them what is good in their work, where they have succeeded! When he has done this, they are eager to correct their own mistakes, as he shows them how these spoil the effect of their own good work. They no longer look upon this as fault-finding. They find that the teacher sees more clearly than they what they aimed at, and can show them how, by avoiding certain faults, they might have come much nearer attaining it.

Thus his correction of composition, by basing itself upon a sympathetic understanding of what the writers aim at, has become true criticism, the teacher himself a true critic.

It will be evident to the student that, if in reading and teaching poetry we are helping our pupils to feel its beauty and its truth, our work is in the true sense criticism. Thus the question as to when criticism should begin is already answered. For more general criticism, in which we attempt to sum up the qualities of a poet's work, I would repeat, in different words, what I have already said about Shakespeare. The pupils will be ready for this when they have read widely in the poet's work. That the pupils should have read, and enjoyed, and, in their own way, criticized the work is the necessary preparation for this criticism. The reading must be kept far in advance of it, so that the pupils have either already felt what the general criticism will put in form for them, or will find that it reveals new beauty and truth in what they have already read. It comes thus as a confirmation, or an interpretation, of their experience, and has something of the effect of poetry on them: they feel its truth, and it seems to share in the beauty it reveals. When will the pupils be ready for this? That depends upon how poetry is taught in school.

I have often wished that our leaders in education would realize the possibilities of the Elementary School. I have worked with Elementary teachers, and know no better body of people to work with—none readier

to discuss new methods, or more grateful for guidance. But which of us could do the work expected of them, which of us is qualified to take a class in every subject of the curriculum? Already in some combined Higher Grade and Elementary Schools this is being realized, and we find in Art, for instance, the Art Master supervising the work of the Elementary Department. In my own subject I hope for a time when there will be a fully qualified English Master in each large Elementary School, giving his time to the supervision and teaching of the subject, not merely taking the most advanced class, but responsible to the Headmaster for the whole English of the school. Think what might be accomplished in the Elementary Department alone if we had a well-coördinated, well-worked scheme of poetry! The normal child spends seven years in this department. If, on the average, we read to them one new poem per week, we should read about forty poems in the year. One new poem per week is not much to ask. It is quite possible to do all the teaching necessary, to do all that I have suggested in my earlier chapters, and read this number of poems; in fact, we cannot be teaching poetry as we ought without doing so. Thus in the seven years we should read about three hundred poems. It is in things like this that the English Master in the Elementary Department would find his work. If the teacher had no natural gift for poetry he could take the poetry of that class, or at least assist him. If the teacher was fond of poetry he could help to coördinate the work, and, by taking an occasional poem,

or talking over with the pupils one they already knew, stimulate their desire for poetry. His chief work in poetry, however, would be to keep a careful eye on the growth of the child's anthology. I have referred to this at different times, and the student may have wondered why I consider it of such importance. Let me illustrate it from the use of words. There are over a hundred thousand words in the English Dictionary. The student will find that he knows only a certain number of these, and that the number he actually uses is a very small proportion indeed. Yet this is the only part of the language that really lives for him: that which serves his needs. As his education advances, his need for language to express himself increases; but it always remains true that the living part of the language is but a small proportion of the words a man knows, and these but a small part of the whole. Let me call this living part of the language his " vocabulary ". What we wish to do for our pupils in English is to increase this vocabulary, as upon this depends all ease and exactness of expression. Take, for instance, the use of the adjective *awful* at the present day. The frequency of its use, or rather mis-use, is a proof that our vocabulary is weak in adjectives. People say it is just laziness, but it is more than that. If the one adjective lay as close to hand as the other, laziness would not explain why the other is always taken. It is not a matter of ignorance. We can supply the right adjective if asked. This, however, is the adjective that lives with us to the exclusion of others. In doing

so it has practically lost its original meaning. The teacher of English should see that the correct expressive words live, and should do his best to root out such weeds as this.

Let the student apply this to poetry. He may have read a great deal, and, in this sense, know a great many poems; but the number he actually knows, that he returns to again and again, that serve his daily needs and live with him, is very small. This small number I call his anthology. The better his education in poetry is, the larger will this anthology be. One of the main reasons for condemning examinations in poetry is that they take no heed of the pupil's anthology, but give full marks for mere knowledge of poetry which may be only skin deep. If we indeed believe that poetry is of vital importance in the life of our nation, let us make it a vital thing in the child's education; that is, let us develop the child's anthology by every means we have. The whole reading and teaching of poetry should aim at this. Could we have poems printed on separate leaflets with suitable eyelets, that they might be fitted into a cover, the child might actually gather his own " garland of verse ". Think of the interest when, some day, the teacher devotes a whole period to reading new poems, that they may choose any they think worthy to add to their collection! Think of the unconscious development of taste, of critical judgment, of interest in the world of poetry—the joy in finding a new poet, a new style, something fresh yet worthy to be added! Think of it growing for seven years, the

little volume of poems chosen by the boy himself to be his own! If the teacher loves poetry, if he has made an anthology for himself, if, in his reading, the poem comes straight from his heart, if, in his teaching, he leads his pupils through beauty to truth, if—but why continue? There is but one " if ". How often in times of discouragement, when not only I seemed to have failed, but the poetry seemed to have gone out of life, the very ideal to have lost its charm—how often, as the utter condemnation of my weakness, but at the same time, as an inspiration rekindling the fire of life, have the great words rung through my mind, " If with all your hearts ye truly seek me, ye shall ever surely find me!"

If the teacher's heart is right he cannot fail. His pupils will leave him with an anthology of poems that will live with them and serve their daily needs. They will remember him in the company of the poets he taught; his voice will ring down the years to them in the words of the poems they love.

# THE WAY OF POETRY

*An Anthology*

FOR YOUNGER READERS

BY

JOHN DRINKWATER



# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT POETRY

NOTHING in the world gives people so much real pleasure as making things. And have you ever tried to think exactly what making a thing means? It does n't mean making something out of nothing in a magical way, but it means taking a thing, or a number of things that are already in existence, and so arranging them, that in addition to the things that have been used, an entirely new thing comes into being.

For instance, a man may take thousands of bricks, each of which is a separate thing that has already been made, and out of them make an entirely new thing, a house. And in building a house the man is happy for two reasons — because he is making a useful thing, a place where he or some one else can live, and also because he is able to take a lot of bricks that have been lying in heaps, that do not seem to mean anything, and arrange them so that they become a house, which means a great deal. And there is nothing which gives us so much satisfaction as this ability to make disorder into order and give a useful meaning to things that until we have arranged them — just as the man arranges his bricks into a house — seemed to have no use or meaning at all.

Now it is a curious thing that by using our minds

we are able to get just this same kind of pleasure, which is so good for us, without having any real things to arrange. If you shut your eyes and then think of a horse, for example, it is certain that there is no real horse that you are looking at, and yet in some wonderful way you have been able to make a horse in your mind out of nothing. And the truth is that the idea of a horse which you have been able to call up in your mind, is just as real a thing, and just as important to you, as the horse that you may see in the street. And nothing will help you more in your life than the habit of seeing things in your mind very clearly; the habit not only of making things with your hands, but of making them in your mind as well. And just as, if you were building a house of bricks, you would not get the greatest possible pleasure unless you built a good, well-shaped, and complete house, so you will not get the greatest possible pleasure from the things that you make in your mind, unless they too are well-shaped and complete. You will find, for instance, that if you think about a horse with your eyes shut, that is to say, if you make a horse in your mind, you will get far more pleasure if you have learnt how to make it very exactly and clearly, than if you are only able to make it uncertainly, so that the horse in your mind is a confused kind of thing.

I have said that the pleasure that we get from making things, whether with our hands or in our minds, is good for us. This is so because, ever since the earth began, the greatest purpose of the life on it has been to grow from a confusion that cannot be understood into

clear shapes that can be well understood, and when we make anything clearly and exactly we are helping this purpose. So that if the thing that we make is not clear, but only, so to speak, half made or a quarter made, we are failing to help the life of which we are a part as fully as we might, and our pleasure is less in consequence. That is why, when you make a horse (or any other thing) in your mind, you will get far less satisfaction if it is only a vague horse, a little like a horse perhaps and a little like a donkey, shall we say, and a little like a bush or a wheelbarrow, than you will if it is a horse clearly and completely made.

And if we think about this a minute or two longer, we shall see that very often the things that we make in our minds are suggested to us by some one else. If I tell you that I saw the moon last night, you will at once make the moon in your mind. And if some one has himself seen a thing very clearly indeed, he will be able to tell us about it so well that we in our turn can make it very clearly in our own minds, and so get an especially large amount of that pleasure of which I have spoken. And it is just this that the poets can do for us, and that is why their poems can give us so much delight.

The poet sees or understands something very clearly indeed, so clearly that he is able to put it quite clearly into his poem, and then in a wonderful way we make it all over again for ourselves in our minds. For instance, William Morris saw the river Thames flowing on a cold winter night underneath

the hills by his country home. And he saw it so clearly that he was able to tell us about it in words so well chosen, and arranged so beautifully for us to hear, that we cannot read them without finding all our best ability helping us in the delightful experience of seeing it all as clearly as Morris himself saw it:

"The wind's on the wold
And the night is a-cold
And Thames runs chill
'T wixt mead and hill."

Now forget about all this, and read the poems in this book. And after a time, when you have got used to them and know which ones you like best, read again what I have been saying, and I hope it will help you to understand something about what poetry may be to you now and through all your lives. For, while the first and by far the most important matter is to like a good thing, it is helpful, and, indeed, increases our liking, if we can find out why we like it.

## THE POET'S WORDS AND IMAGES

I HAVE tried to tell you something of the reason why poetry could give us so much pleasure, and do so much to enrich our lives and our ways of thought. I want now to talk a little about the way in which the poet does his work, so that you may begin to understand what lies behind the making of the poetry that we find so full of enchantment. And, again, I do not want you to puzzle too much over what I say, but just to read it carefully, and then from time to time

go back to it, from the poems themselves, in the hope that it may gradually help you to form your own clear judgment about the things that you read.

And first, although it seems a very simple thing to say, it is important to remember always, that the material which the poet uses for his work is words. Words to the poet are what paint is to the painter, or stone or marble to the sculptor, or notes of sound to the composer of music. So that if a poet uses his words well he needs no other help, while if he uses them badly nothing can be done to make his poem anything but worthless. Let us think what this means. Suppose a poet to be looking along a country lane on a dry autumn day, just when most of the leaves have fallen from the trees. Seeing the flock of many-coloured leaves driven along by the wind, his emotions are stirred, and he then feels the need of shaping the emotion into the clear shapes of poetry. And to do this he has nothing but words for his purpose. So far as we are concerned, it is of no use for him to dance or wave his arms about in excitement, or rush along as though he too were a leaf driven by the wind. To do these things might in a certain way express his feelings, although it would be an expression of far less meaning than the exact statements of poetry,[1] but in

[1] If, for instance, you had been with Wordsworth when he saw a rainbow, and he had suddenly stopped walking and pointed to it, drawing a deep sigh of pleasure, just as any one in thousands of men might do, you would have by no means realised his personal delight as intimately as you now do when you read his simple but complete words —

"My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky."

any case they would mean nothing to us, since we should see nothing of them. So that what he has to record must be recorded in words, and in words alone. This, by the way, is the reason why it is so bad, when you are reading poetry aloud to people, to add to the words all sorts of gestures and facial expressions. The poet when he has finally chosen and arranged his words, if his poem is worth reading at all, has already said completely what he had to say, and if we add to his perfect expression this other feeble expression of our own, it is nothing but an impertinence, as though we were saying, "This poet is not able to express himself very clearly, so we must help him out."

Having now seen that words are what he has entirely to depend upon, we shall realise how necessary it is that the selection and arranging of words shall be his own doing and not as he remembers it to have been done by some one else. If the poet really sees that scene of the country lane and blown leaves with his own eyes and in his own heart, he will be so intent upon his personal experience that his mind will be absorbed in inventing a personal way of expressing that experience; he will, in fact, create, and it is just this creating that makes us create for ourselves when we read his poem, and so gives us so much precious delight, as I have already explained. But if his experience is a vague and incomplete one, his mind, instead of working vigorously to create for itself, will lazily turn away to remember what some one else has said about the same kind of thing, and since one mind can never repeat another mind's work perfectly, he

will only manage a half-expression, a second-hand and cheating expression, and directly we understand anything about poetry we are able to see through this kind of deception at once, and we know that it is useless to us, and gives us no real pleasure at all. Because what happens in this case is that the poet only gets a vague expression to match his vague experience, and he makes it vague in our minds too, which is exactly what poetry must never do.

We may now see how a great poet treats the vision he had of the autumn wind and the leaves. Shelley wrote of it thus:

> "O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
> Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
> Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
> Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red."

You will notice at first how wonderfully he brings into our minds a vivid idea of that "*unseen* presence" by making it stir into movement the *dead* leaves, which in turn he makes so real for us in their sharply contrasted colours — "yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red." And then you will notice that he does more than this, which brings me to the other thing I want to tell you about the poet's way of working. He says that the leaves are scattered by the wind —

> "Like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing."

This is what is called an image, and to use an image is one of the most powerful ways in which the poet can make himself clear to us. Shelley was not writing about ghosts and an enchanter, but about leaves

scattered before the wind. But the cloud of leaves, driven along in commotion, brought into his mind an image of huddled ghosts crowding before the enchanter who had power to drive them forth at his will. He set this vision down very simply in words, but perfectly —

"Ghosts from an enchanter fleeing."

And then, although he had already conceived the idea of the leaves driven before the wind in words that could express it quite directly — "thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead are driven . . . yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red" — he sharpens the whole picture in our minds by taking our thoughts for a moment to that other idea of the ghosts and the enchanter, and then telling us that the thing of which he is actually writing is *like* that other thing of which he is not actually writing. And this using of an image to make the impression of what he sees even clearer than it would have been by direct statement, however exact and lucid, is an act of the imagination, which word you see is built upon the word image.

## THE LIFE OF POETRY

If you look at the list of poets at the end of this book, you will see that while some of the poems that you are reading were written by men who, like Shakespeare, were born nearly four hundred years ago, others were written by men who are living now. A sage once said, "There is no new thing under the

sun," and yet it is one of the many wonders that we learn from poetry that life, although it goes on from age to age, concerned with the same emotions and seeing the same natural beauty in the world, is always splendidly new. Shakespeare could see and hear —

> "Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stone, and good in everything,"

and then one poet after another following him could be aware of the same thing, and yet, because he did strictly perceive it for himself, he could make it as new an experience for himself, and for us when we read his poem, as though no one in the world had ever perceived it before. Thus, nearly two hundred years after Shakespeare, Wordsworth could write —

> "To me the meanest flower that blows, can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

and then, more than a hundred years later again we have Mr. Ralph Hodgson with —

> "The everlasting pipe and flute
> Of wind and sea and bird and brute,
> And lips deaf men imagine mute
> In wood and stone and clay."

So that you see the poet does not have to discover and express new emotions and thoughts, but rather to express any emotion and his thought about it in such a way that we are certain that the experience in his mind is newly discovered by him and not merely handed on to him ready made by some one else. A great poem might very well be written to-morrow about so simple and old a thing as the blossoming of an apple-tree.

You will have noticed that often when you feel very intensely about anything, and whether the feeling be a happy or a sad one, you try to satisfy yourself by singing some tune or another; that your emotions, in other words, try to find some sort of rhythmic expression. This is a deep law of our natures which none of the philosophers has been able rightly to explain, but it is a law which we all recognise. And the poet, too, when he feels and realises anything with sufficient intensity, finds his expression naturally taking on a rhythmic form. With each new poem this rhythm is a fresh and personal thing, and yet we find that the language which he has to use has through many hundreds of years discovered certain forms or metres for itself as being best suited to its character. And you will notice as you read these books that one poet after another does in fact use the same metrical forms, not lazily and for want of the trouble to invent new ones, but because his instinct tells him that they are the right and natural ones for his language to fall into. But the strange and wonderful thing is that each poet, while he adds to his authority by using these traditional forms, is able to impress them with his own personal sense of rhythm in such a way that they never grow stale, and are indeed new things with each new poet who uses them.

And so poetry is beautifully like life itself in seeming not to change yet always being new. Each year you see the trees covering themselves with green, the flowers in bloom, the young animals in the fields, the sun shining on the corn, the frost making its icicles

and putting lovely patterns on the window. And in a way these seem to be the same trees and flowers and seasons that have been passing before men's eyes far back through the ages, and yet each year they are all marvellously new, as truly exciting discoveries for us when we see them as though there had never been such life before. And so with the poet and his poetry. He sees the same world, feels the same emotions, and meets the same questions as did his fathers for generations before him, and in finding expression for the working of his mind he will generally accept a form that has grown up in the practice of many poets whom he follows. But he sees and feels and questions out of his individual life, until the old experience is transfigured into something radiantly new and interesting, and he breathes into the old forms of poetry his own delighted sense of rhythm, until they too become fresh and vivid as the flowers that come to us with untiring wonder year by year.

## THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY

I HAVE already talked to you a little of the nature of poetry and its meaning for us, of the poet's methods, and of the way in which tradition and new life combine to give poetry its power. It may interest you to know something of the actual history of English poetry, and this again will help you to make the pleasure that you get in reading a clearer and more orderly thing in your minds. To write anything like a complete account of the progress of Eng-

lish poetry through six hundred years or so would take a large volume instead of a few pages, but it may be possible to give you a simple outline that you can easily carry about in your memory without confusing a very important thing, which is the appreciation of poetry, with a very unimportant thing, which is the learning of dry facts about it.

The first great poet, then, who wrote in the English language as we know it to-day, was Geoffrey Chaucer, who is sometimes called the father of English poetry. In his verses, which show a mastery of words that has never been excelled, he told stories that are among the best that have ever been told. When a little later on you begin to read them for yourselves, you will find them full of beauty and amusement, for Chaucer's humour was as great as his passion. Then for nearly two hundred years, although poetry never died, and was sometimes served by such admirable poets as Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey, there was no very rich period, and Chaucer remained a great and solitary figure in the art. It was not until towards the end of the sixteenth century, or something over three hundred years ago, that a large group of poets began to work together towards making English poetry the thing of which we should be prouder than of anything else that England has given to the world. It was then that Christopher Marlowe and Edmund Spenser and Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare walked about the streets of London, and wrote the poems and plays that have grown even more wonderful as the years

have gone by, until to-day they seem as much a part of an Englishman's life as his rivers and counties. With these great ones were a host of others — it would be easy to name twenty — who shared the inspiration and added to the glory of what we call the Elizabethan age.

From that time the full tide of English poetry has moved on unchecked down to our own day. It is difficult, and not very useful, to say exactly after Elizabeth's time where one period of poetry ended and another began, but the next great poet after Shakespeare to stand out in supremacy was John Milton, who was born about the time that Shakespeare died. The Elizabethans had been tremendously interested in the daily life about them, and even in their most tragic passions there is a certain intimacy of detail that makes us remember that they were men like ourselves, puzzled and anxious and brave and excitedly happy by turns. But Milton, who was blind for a long term of his life, making his greatest poems out of his meditation upon God's dealings with the world and men that he had created, seemed to move in a serene, almost untroubled mastery of thought, and that is why he is so consoling a poet to go to when we find life and the affairs of men most difficult and unintelligible. He gives us then something of his own noble imagination with which to rise above the narrow ways of our lesser vision. And just when this poet was creating the sublimest world in all poetry, where gods and angels and devils embodied the highest imaginings that the human

mind could conceive, others, notably Robert Herrick, were writing exquisite lyrics of the country side and the simple fortunes of men.

Alexander Pope and John Dryden, the poets who followed Milton, were the masters of a period in poetry when a curious weakness of the age expressed itself, naturally enough, in the work of the poets. In life what we call good manners are the superficial token of fine character, and when there is no fine character behind them, they become false and silly, not being really good manners at all, but imitation good manners. Now it would be quite unjust to say that there was no fine character in the age of Pope and Dryden, or that there is no nobility in the work of these poets and their fellows, but it is a fact that people at that time did often make the mistake of supposing that good manners were a sufficient occupation in themselves, instead of realising that they could never exist at all unless they were merely the incidental result of fine character. And so they often gave themselves up to trivialities of life, and in their worship of good manners were apt to get no farther than foolish and affected manners, and this confusion in some measure reflected itself in the poetry of the time. But while we find in the work of such poets as Pope, a mechanical correctness of form and a conventionality of thought that is sometimes tiresome, we must remember that we have only to make a little allowance for this to discover that they, too, are carrying on the great tradition of poetry with personal and enduring genius.

## INTRODUCTION

Coming now to the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, to which we are led from Pope by men such as Thomas Gray and William Blake through a time not very rich in poetry, we have a second great flowering of English song, as wonderful almost as that other one of Elizabethan days. Here we find William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Robert Burns, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats, with others whose names are hardly less famous. These men, it need not be said, wrote each in his own strongly distinctive way, but they all worked, under some common impulse and without realising that they were working to the same end, towards taking poetry back from the conventional habits of an artificial society to the simplicity of nature and the fundamental emotions of life. They belonged to an older country than the Elizabethans, and the fierce tragic passion of the earlier poets seems perhaps to give way to a deep and wistful but always splendidly courageous tenderness in these later men, but the inspiration of poetry runs as strongly as ever and there is no weariness, nothing but magnificently renewed vigour.

And then came the poets of yesterday, poets whom your fathers and grandfathers can remember as being alive — Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, Algernon Charles Swinburne, William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and the rest, all of them increasing the riches of English poetry down to our own time. Nor, as you will have found in reading these books, did the making of poe-

try stop yesterday. It still goes on to-day, and there are poets writing now whose names you will remember when you are old men and women, as those other names have been remembered by our fathers before us. And when they too have gone, poetry will find new imaginations in which to work its never-dying will.

JOHN DRINKWATER

# MY BOOK OF STORIES FROM THE POETS

Told in Prose by

CHRISTINE CHAUNDLER



# INTRODUCTION

WHEN we consider the fact that prose is an easier and far more natural form of expression than poetry and one which, at the present time, is very much more common, it is rather surprising to find that long before any story-books were written very many of the old legends and fairy tales were set down in the form of verse. Nowadays stories are told in ordinary, simple language such as people use in everyday conversation, and it very often happens that one story is considered better than another just because it is expressed in words that are easier to understand; but in the olden days, when a great many of the poems whose stories are told in this book were written, this was not the case.

The first story to be published in ordinary language was "Robinson Crusoe," which I expect you have read. It was written by Daniel Defoe in the year 1715. But it was not until twenty-five years after that another was written ("Pamela," by Samuel Richardson) that marked the beginning of story-writing in the form which now prevails, and, because of the difficulties of printing, it was not until fairly recent times that the writing of stories became at all common.

Long before this time, however, poetry enjoyed a great deal of popularity, and very many tales, which in

modern times would have been written in prose, were, instead, set down in verse. There are several reasons for this, and they are not really hard to understand.

The first is that, as I have already said, printing was a very great difficulty, and, in fact, before Caxton set up his press at Westminster in 1474, there was no such thing. The result of this was that everything had to be copied out by hand by the monks, and although a certain amount of this was done, and done very beautifully with wonderful drawings down the sides of the sheets and beautiful colour effects that were known as illuminations, yet naturally nothing of very great length could be undertaken, and, moreover, they could not afford to do anything that was not especially good. So, because nobody was very much impressed by ordinary simple language in those days, unless it happened to be in Latin, the monks only bothered to copy out poetry.

There is another reason. Very many of the old poems were originally songs, sung by travelling musicians who went by the name of "Troubadours." There are a great many stories that might be told of these old minstrels, and I wish I had time to tell you some of them, for they are well worth hearing. The troubadours make some of the most romantic figures in history, and I have often thought that if I had the chance of being carried back to some earlier age, I should choose to visit the castle of some old Norman baron at the time when he and his family and vassals were seated round the huge log fire, listening to a stirring song of brave knights and beautiful princesses sung by a minstrel in queer fantastic garb, who sat accompanying himself on a harp.

Many of the songs sung by the troubadours have been

handed down for several hundreds of years, and though they have probably changed a good deal in the course of time, yet the substance of them is the same, and several of the tales in this book are founded upon them.

There are various other reasons why so much poetry was written in the olden days, but I have not time to dwell on those now. It is enough to say that the habit of poetry became so popular that nobody thought of writing a story save as a poem or possibly a play. And what wonderful poems they sometimes were! For even their poetry in those times was quite different from ours. They used long words that only the people who write dictionaries have ever heard of, and they wrote sentences that were so tangled up that even the very cleverest folk found them hard to understand.

In more modern times, since story writing has become common, this art of telling tales in poetry has almost died away, but it flourished until the beginning of the last century, and it is only in quite recent years that it has nearly disappeared. As I have said, many of these poems are so long and so difficult to understand that young people do not care to read them, but all the same the stories they tell are very beautiful and interesting, and they form the themes of some of the finest poetry ever written in English. And this is why these stories have been written. Not that they may take the place of the poems—you must not think that for one moment!—but that, when you have read this book, you may go straight to the poems themselves and read the stories in all their original beauty.

There are other things, too, about this book which may interest you, and not the least of these are the lives

of the poets whose stories are told. There are so many of them that we are only able to touch on one or two. Perhaps, because he was the youngest and because in some ways he was the most brilliant, it might be interesting to tell you one or two things in connection with Keats.

I have said that he was the youngest because he was only twenty-six when he died in Rome in the year 1821, so that all his great works were written at a comparatively early age.

John Keats started life as an apprentice to a surgeon at Enfield, and when twenty-two published his first volume of poems, which was very unfavourably criticised in the literary magazines of the day. There are some people who say that these adverse criticisms were the cause of Keats' early death, but really this is untrue, for he was far too great a man to be disturbed by things of that sort, and actually he died of consumption.

The most beautiful poem Keats ever wrote was called "Endymion," which some day, no doubt, you will read; and quite one of the finest is "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," the story of which you will find in this book.

Another poet whose life contains many points of interest is Alfred Tennyson. Tennyson had two brothers, both of whom were poets like himself, and although some of their work is very good, yet he was by far the greatest of the three. His first book, to which his brother Charles also contributed, was called "Poems by Two Brothers," and although it is a work that is very little known now, yet there is much in it that shows promise of the wonderful poetry that was to come.

Some day you must read the poems, "Enoch Arden" and "The Princess," the stories of both of which are

given here, for it will afford you an interesting example of contrast in styles.

Tennyson was only forty-one when he became Poet Laureate, which, as I expect you know, means the first poet in the land, and he held this position until his death, which occurred a few years after he accepted a peerage.

Now, although as a rule poetry is serious, yet it has its lighter moments, and some of the best examples of light poetry are to be found in the " Ingoldsby Legends," by R. H. Barham, who wrote under the name of Thomas Ingoldsby. At the age of twelve this clever poet had his right arm crippled in a coach accident, and after this, seeing that he could no longer play games like other boys, he devoted himself to his studies, and later on gave to the world a poem that will always be remembered for its humour: " The Jackdaw of Rheims."

Although nearly all poets whose works are mentioned in this book are English, yet Longfellow, whose " Evangeline " and " The Courtship of Miles Standish " appear here, is an American. He was directly descended from members of that little band of pilgrims which sailed to America in the *Mayflower* so many years ago and formed the origin of the present United States of America.

When, at the age of fourteen, Longfellow entered Bowdoin College, Brunswick, he showed great signs of intellectual power, and this seemed to increase throughout his days as a student. At the age of eighteen he was appointed professor of modern languages in his college, a truly remarkable feat in one so young.

Longfellow was always very fond of children, and he has written a lot of poetry about them, including a little

piece called " The Children's Hour," which was written about his own two daughters, and you would do well to read it if you have not already done so.

Although Longfellow was successful as a poet, yet he had an unhappy life, for his first wife died after they had been married only four years, and his second wife did not live long; this sad fact can be very often noticed in his work.

Almost at the end of this book you will find a poem called " The Ancient Mariner," by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This was one in a book which he wrote, together with Wordsworth, called " The Lyrical Ballads," and, as you will learn later, it had a very great effect upon the literature of the day.

Coleridge and Wordsworth and Southey formed what are now known as the Lake poets, because they lived close together near the lakes of Cumberland. Although Wordsworth is probably the best known of the three, and Southey, because of the book he wrote called " The Life of Nelson," comes next, yet there are many people who prefer Coleridge as a poet.

" The Ancient Mariner" is a poem that will never be forgotten, not so much for the story itself as for the style in which it is written; and this peculiar fascination is to be seen in many other of Coleridge's works.

One of the most popular short poems in English is the one by Sir Walter Scott about young Lochinvar, the story of which is given here. Scott is a member of that very rare class of writer who has attained fame both as a poet and as a novelist, and who is equally great in each respect.

He started his literary career as a poet, and produced

many famous works, including "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," "Marmion," "The Lady of the Lake," and a number of others, and for a time he was the greatest narrative poet of his day. Then another came to the fore whose fame threatened to eclipse that of Scott. This was Lord Byron, the writer of "Childe Harold," "Don Juan," "Manfred," and, amongst many others, the poem whose story is given in this volume, "The Prisoner of Chillon."

Byron's work became so popular that Scott realised that in this particular sphere he was unable to hold his own, so, nothing daunted, he turned his attention to another field. Ten years previously it happened that he had started a historical romance which he had put away only half finished; now, hunting about in an old lumber room, he came across the old manuscript, and, completing it, had it published anonymously in the year 1814. This was "Waverley," and was the first of a long series known as the "Waverley Novels," which is now famous all over the world. Some day, if you have not already done so, you should read "Ivanhoe," and "Rob Roy," and "The Talisman." You will find that although they may look "stodgy," they are really just as exciting and far more interesting than many of the books written nowadays.

Scott was in many ways as brave as the characters he loved to picture, for he spent the last ten years of his life in paying off the immense debt incurred by his publishers, who went bankrupt, and but for his unceasing toil to do this he would no doubt have lived much longer.

Before I come to the end of this rather long introduction there is just one other point I would like to make clear. This is about the "Percy Reliques." You will

see, if you look in the "Contents," that a number of the poems of which the stories are given come from this source.

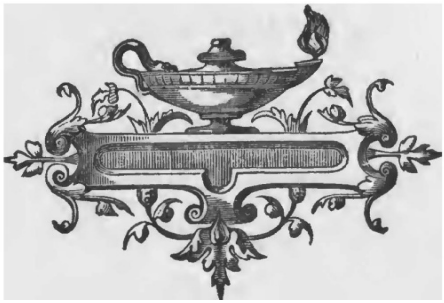
The "Percy Reliques" are a collection of old Border songs, poems and legends, gathered together in 1765 by an old bishop; they contain many of the finest examples of old English poetry.

N. G. D.

# The Gentle Reader

BY

SAMUEL McCHORD CROTHERS



# The Enjoyment of Poetry

BROWNING'S description of the effect of the recital of classic poetry upon a band of piratical Greeks must seem to many persons to be exaggerated: —

> "Then, because Greeks are Greeks, and hearts are hearts,
> And poetry is power, they all outbroke
> In a great joyous laughter with much love."

Because Americans are Americans, and business is business, and time is money, and life is earnest, we take our poetry much more seriously than that. We are ready to form classes to study it and to discuss it, but these solemn assemblies are not likely to be disturbed by outbursts of "great joyous laughter."

We usually accept poetry as mental discipline. It is as if the poet said, "Go to, now. I will

produce a masterpiece." Thereupon the conscientious reader answers, "Very well; I can stand it. I will apply myself with all diligence, that by means of it I may improve my mind." Who has not sometimes quailed before the long row of British Poets in uniform binding, standing stiffly side by side, like so many British grenadiers on dress parade? Who has not felt his courage ooze away at the sight of those melancholy volumes labeled Complete Poetical Works? Poetical Remains they used to call them, and there is something funereal in their aspect.

The old hymn says, "Religion never was designed to make our pleasures less," and the same thing ought to be said about poetry. The distaste for poetry arises largely from the habit of treating it as if it were only a more difficult kind of prose. We are so much under the tyranny of the scientific method that the habits of the schoolroom intrude, and we try to extract instruction from what was meant to give us joy. The prosaic commentary obscures the beauty of the text, so that

> "The glad old romance, the gay chivalrous story,
> With its fables of faery, its legends of glory,

Is turned to a tedious instruction, not new,
To the children, who read it insipidly through."

One of the most ruthless invasions of the prosaic faculties into the realm of poetry comes from the thirst for general information. When this thirst becomes a disease, it is not satisfied with census reports and encyclopædia articles, but values literature according to the number of facts presented. Suppose these lines from "Paradise Lost" to be taken for study: —

"Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallombrosa, where th' Etrurian shades
High over-arched embower, or scattered sedge
Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion armed
Hath vexed the Red Sea coast, whose waves o'erthrew
Busiris and his Memphian chivalry."

What an opportunity this presents to the schoolmaster! "Come now," he cries with pedagogic glee, "answer me a few questions. Where is Vallombrosa? What is the character of its autumnal foliage? Bound Etruria. What is sedge? Explain the myth of Orion? Point out the constellation on the map of the heavens. Where is the Red Sea? Who was Busiris? By what other name was he known? Who were the Memphian Chivalry?"

Here is material for exhaustive research in geography, ancient and modern, history, botany, astronomy, meteorology, chronology, and archæology. The industrious student may get almost as much information out of "Paradise Lost" as from one of those handy compilations of useful knowledge, which are sold on the railway cars for twenty-five cents. As for the poetry of Milton, that is another matter.

Next to the temptation to use a poem as a receptacle for a mass of collateral information is that to use it for the display of one's own penetration. As in the one case it is treated as if it were an encyclopædia article, in the other it is treated as if it were a verbal puzzle. It is taken for granted that the intention of the poet is to conceal thought, and the game is for the reader to find it out. We are hunting for hidden meanings, and we greet one another with the grim salutation of the creatures in the jungle: "Good hunting!" "What is the meaning of this passage?" Who has not heard this sudden question propounded in regard to the most transparent sentence from an author who is deemed

worthy of study? The uninitiated, in the simplicity of his heart, might answer that he probably means what he says. Not at all; if that were so, "what are we here for?" We are here to find hidden meanings, and one who finds the meaning simple must be stopped, as Armado stops Moth, with

"Define, define, well-educated infant."

It is a verbal masquerade to which we have been invited. No knowing what princes in disguise, as well as anarchists and nihilists and other objectionably interesting persons, may be discovered when the time for unmasking comes.

Now, the effect of all this is that many persons turn away from the poets altogether. Why should they spend valuable time in trying to unravel the meaning of lines which were invented to baffle them? There are plenty of things we do not understand, without going out of our way to find them. Then, as Pope observes,

"True No-meaning puzzles more than Wit."

The poets themselves, as if conscious that they are objects of suspicion, are inclined to be apo-

logetic, and endeavor to show that they are doing business on a sound prosaic basis. Wordsworth set the example of such painstaking self-justification. His conscience compelled him to make amends to the literal minded Public for poetic indiscretions, and to offer to settle all claims for damages. What a shame-faced excuse he makes for the noble lines on Rob Roy's grave. "I have since been told that I was misinformed as to the burial-place of Rob Roy; if so, I may plead in excuse that I wrote on apparently good authority, namely that of a well-educated lady who lived at the head of the lake."

One is reminded of the preface to the works of The Sweet Singer of Michigan: "This little book is composed of truthful pieces. All those which speak of being killed, died, or drowned are truthful songs, others are more truth than poetry."

It is against this mistaken conscientiousness that the Gentle Reader protests. He insists that the true "defense of poesy" is that it has an altogether different function from prose. It is not to be appreciated by the prosaic understanding; unless, indeed, that awkward faculty be

treated to some Delsartean decomposing exercises to get rid of its stiffness.

"When I want more truth than poetry," he says, "I will go directly to The Sweet Singer of Michigan, or I will inquire of the well-educated lady who lives at the head of the lake. I do not like to have a poet troubled about such small matters."

Then he reads with approval the remarks of one of his own order who lived in the seventeenth century, who protests against those "who take away the liberty of a poet and fetter his feet in the shackles of an historian. For why should a poet doubt in story to mend the intrigues of fortune by more delightful conveyances of probable fictions because austere historians have entered into bond to truth; an obligation which were in poets as foolish and unnecessary as is the bondage of false martyrs, who lie in chains for a mistaken opinion. But by this I would imply that truth, narrative and past, is the idol of historians (who worship a dead thing), and truth operative and by effects continually alive is the mistress of poets, who hath not her existence in matter but in reason."

I am well aware that the attitude of the Gentle Reader seems to many strenuous persons to be unworthy of our industrial civilization. These persons insist that we shall make hard work of our poetry, if for no other reason than to preserve our self-respect. Here as elsewhere they insist upon the stern law that if a man will not labor neither shall he eat. Even the poems of an earlier and simpler age which any child can understand must be invested with some artificial difficulty. The learned guardians of these treasures insist that they cannot be appreciated unless there has been much preliminary wrestling with a "critical apparatus," and much delving among "original sources." This is the same principle that makes the prudent householder provide a sharp saw and a sufficient pile of cord wood as a test to be applied to the stranger who asks for a breakfast. There is much academic disapproval of one who in defiance of all law insists on enjoying poetry after his own "undressed, unpolished, uneducated, unpruned, untrained, or rather unlettered, or ratherest unconfirmed fashion." I, however, so thoroughly sympathize with the Gentle Reader that I desire to present his point of view.

To understand poetry is a vain ambition. That which we fully understand is the part that is *not* poetry. It is that which passes our understanding which has the secret in itself. There is an incommunicable grace that defies all attempts at analysis. Poetry is like music; it is fitted, not to define an idea or to describe a fact, but to voice a mood. The mood may be the mood of a very simple person, — the mood of a shepherd watching his flocks, or of a peasant in the fields; or, on the other hand, it may be the mood of a philosopher whose mind has been engrossed with the most subtle problems of existence. But in each case the mood, by some suggestion, must be communicated to us. Thoughts and facts must be transfigured; they must come to us as through some finer medium. As we are told that we must experience religion before we know what religion is, so we must experience poetry. The poet is the enchanter, and we are the willing victims of his spells: —

> "Would'st thou see
> A man i' th' clouds and hear him speak to thee?
> Would'st thou be in a dream and yet not sleep?
> Or would'st thou in a moment laugh and weep?

Wouldest thou lose thyself and catch no harm?
And find thyself again without a charm?

O then come hither
And lay my book, thy head and heart together."

Only the reader who yields to the charm can dream the dream. The poet may weave his story of the most common stuff, but "there 's magic in the web of it." If we are conscious of this magical power, we forgive the lack of everything else. The poet may be as ignorant as Aladdin himself, but he has a strange power over our imaginations. At his word they obey, traversing continents, building palaces, painting pictures. They say, "We are ready to obey as thy slaves, and the slaves of all that have that lamp in their hands, — we and the other slaves of the lamp."

This is the characteristic of the poet's power. He does not construct a work of the imagination, — he makes our imaginations do that. That is why the fine passages of elaborate description in verse are usually failures. The verse-maker describes accurately and at length. The poet speaks a word, and Presto! change! We are transported into a new land, and our eyes are "baptized into the grace and privilege of see-

ing." Many have taken in hand to write descriptions of spring; and some few painstaking persons have nerved themselves to read what has been written. I turn to the prologue of the "Canterbury Tales;" it is not about spring, it is spring, and I am among those who long to go upon a pilgrimage. A description of a jungle is an impertinence to one who has come under the spell of William Blake's

> "Tiger! tiger! burning bright
> In the forest of the night."

Those fierce eyes glowing there in the darkness sufficiently illuminate the scene. Immediately it is midsummer, and we feel all its delicious languor when Browning's David sings of

> "The sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
> That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well."

The first essential to the enjoyment of poetry is leisure. The demon Hurry is the tempter, and knowledge is the forbidden fruit in the poet's paradise. To enjoy poetry, you must renounce not only your easily besetting sins, but your easily besetting virtues as well. You must not be industrious, or argumentative, or conscientious, or strenuous. I do not mean that

you must be a person of unlimited leisure and without visible means of support. I have known some very conscientious students of literature who, when off duty, found time to enjoy poetry. I mean that if you have only half an hour for poetry, for that half hour you must be in a leisurely frame of mind.

The poet differs from the novelist in that he requires us to rest from our labors. The ordinary novel is easy reading, because it takes us as we are, in the midst of our hurry. The mind has been going at express speed all the day; what the novelist does is to turn the switch, and off we go on another track. The steam is up, and the wheels go around just the same. The great thing is still action, and we eagerly turn the pages to see what is going to happen next, — unless we are reading some of our modern realistic studies of character. Even then we are lured on by the expectation that, at the last moment, something may happen. But when we turn to the poets, we are in the land of the lotus-eaters. The atmosphere is that of a perfect day,

> "Whereon it is enough for me
> Not to be doing, but to be."

Into this land our daily cares cannot follow us. It is an

> "enchanted land, we know not where,
> But lovely as a landscape in a dream."

Once in this enchanted country, haste seems foolish. Why should we toil on as if we were walking for a wager? It is as if one had the privilege of joining Izaak Walton as he loiters in the cool shade of a sweet honeysuckle hedge, and should churlishly trudge on along the dusty highway rather than accept the gentle angler's invitation: "Pray, let us rest ourselves in this sweet, shady arbor of jessamine and myrtle; and I will requite you with a bottle of sack, and when you have pledged me, I will repeat the verses I promised you." One may, as a matter of strict conscience, be both a pedestrian and a prohibitionist, and yet not find it in his heart to decline such an invitation.

The poets who delight us with their verses are not always serious-minded persons with an important thought to communicate. When I read,

> "In Xanadu did Kublai Khan
> A stately pleasure-dome decree,"

I am not a bit wiser than I was before, but I am

a great deal happier; although I have not the slightest idea where Xanadu was, and only the vaguest notion of Kublai Khan.

There are poems whose charm lies in their illusiveness. Fancy any one trying to explain Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel." Yet when the mood is on us we see her as she leans

> "From the gold bar of Heaven:
> Her eyes were deeper than the depth
> Of waters stilled at even;
> She had three lilies in her hand
> And the stars in her hair were seven."

We look over the mystic ramparts and are dimly conscious that

> "the souls mounting up to God
> Went by her like thin flames."

This is not astronomy nor theology, nor any of the things we know all about — it is only poetry.

Let no one trouble me by attempting to elucidate "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came." I do not care for a Baedeker. I prefer to lose my way. I love the darkness rather than light. I do not care for a topographical chart of the hills that

> "like giants at a hunting lay,
> Chin upon hand."

The mood in which we enjoy such poetry is that described in Emerson's "Forerunners."

> "Long I followed happy guides,
> I could never reach their sides.
>
> But no speed of mine avails
> To hunt upon their shining trails.
>
> On eastern hills I see their smokes,
> Mixed with mist by distant lochs.
> I met many travelers
> Who the road had surely kept:
> They saw not my fine revelers."

If our thoughts make haste to join these "fine revelers," rejoicing in the sense of freedom and mystery, delighting in the mist and the wind, careless of attaining so that we may follow the shining trails, all is well.

As there are poems which are not meant to be understood, so there are poems that are not meant to be read; that is, to be read through. There is Keats's "Endymion," for instance. I have never been able to get on with it. Yet it is delightful, — that is the very reason why I do not care to get on with it. Wherever I begin, I feel that I might as well stay where I am. It is a sweet wilderness into which the reader is introduced.

"Paths there were many,
Winding through palmy fern and rushes fenny
And ivy banks; all leading pleasantly
To a wide lawn. . . .
Who could tell
The freshness of the space of heaven above,
Edged round with dark tree-tops? — through which a dove
Would often beat its wings, and often, too,
A little cloud would move across the blue."

We are brought into the very midst of this pleasantness. Deep in the wood we see fair faces and garments white. We see the shepherds coming to the woodland altar.

"A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks
As may be read of in Arcadian books;
Such as sat list'ning round Apollo's pipe
When the great deity, for earth too ripe,
Let his divinity o'erflowing die
In music, through the vales of Thessaly."

We see the venerable priest pouring out the sweet-scented wine, and then we see the young Endymion himself: —

"He seemed
To common lookers-on like one who dreamed
Of idleness in groves Elysian."

What happened next? What did Endymion do? Really, I do not know. It is so much pleasanter, at this point, to close the book, and

dream "of idleness in groves Elysian." The chances are that when one turns to the poem again he will not begin where he left off, but at the beginning, and read as if he had never read it before; or rather, with more enjoyment because he has read it so many times: —

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing."

Shelley describes a mood such as Keats brings to us: —

"My spirit like a charmèd bark doth swim
Upon the liquid waves of thy sweet singing
Far away into regions dim
Of rapture, as a boat with swift sails winging
Its way adown some many-winding river."

He who finds himself afloat upon the "many-winding river" throws aside the laboring oar. It is enough to float on, — he cares not whither.

What greater pleasure is there than in the "Idylls of the King" provided we do not study them, but dream them. We must enter into the poet's own mood: —

> "I seemed
> To sail with Arthur under looming shores,
> Point after point, till on to dawn, when dreams
> Begin to feel the truth and stir of day."

It is good to be there, in that far-off time, good to come to Camelot: —

> "Built by old kings, age after age,
> So strange and rich and dim."

All we see of kings, and magicians, and ladies, and knights is "strange and rich and dim." Over everything is a luminous haze. There are

> "hollow tramplings up and down,
> And muffled voices heard, and shadows past."

There is the flashing of swords, the weaving of spells, the seeing of visions. All these things become real to us; not simply the stainless king and the sinful queen, the prowess of Lancelot and the love of Elaine, but the magic of Merlin and the sorceries of Vivien, with her charms

> "Of woven paces and of waving hands."

And we must stand at last with King Arthur on the shore of the mystic sea, and see the barge come slowly with the three queens, "black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream;" and hear across the water a cry,

"As it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world."

But what good is there in all this? Why waste time on idle dreams? We hear Walt Whitman's challenge to romantic poetry: —

"Arthur vanished with all his knights, Merlin and Lancelot and Galahad, all gone, dissolved utterly like an exhalation;
Embroidered, dazzling, foreign world, with all its gorgeous legends, myths,
Its kings and castles proud, its priests and warlike lords and courtly dames,
Passed to its charnel vault, coffined with crown and armor on,
Blazoned with Shakspere's purple page
And dirged by Tennyson's sweet sad rhyme."

Away with the old romance! Make room for the modern bard, who is

"Bluffed not a bit by drain-pipes, gasometers, and artificial fertilizers."

The Gentle Reader, also, is not to be bluffed by any useful things, however unpleasant they may be, but he winces a little as he reads that the "far superber themes for poets and for art" include the teaching by the poet of how

"To use the hammer and the saw (rip or cross-cut),
To cultivate a turn for carpentering, plastering, painting,
To work as tailor, tailoress, nurse, hostler, porter,
To invent a little something ingenious to aid the washing, cooking, cleaning."

The Muse of Poetry shrieks at the mighty lines in praise of "leather-dressing, coach-making, boiler-making," and the rest. Boiler-making, she protests, is a useful industry and highly to be commended, but it is not music. When asked to give a reason why she should not receive all these things as poetry, the Muse is much embarrassed. "It 's all true," she says. "Leather-dressing and boiler-making are undoubted realities, while Arthur and Lancelot may be myths." Yet she is not quite ready to be off with the old love and on with the new, — it 's all so sudden.

Whitman himself furnishes the best illustrations of the difference between poetry and prose. He comes like another Balaam to prophesy against those who associate poetry with beauty of form and melody of words; and then the poetic spirit seizes upon him and lifts him into the region of harmony. In the Song of the Universal he declares that —

"From imperfection's murkiest cloud
Darts always forth one ray of perfect light,
One flash of heaven's glory.
To fashion's, customs discord,
To the mad Babel's din, the deafening orgies,
Soothing each lull, a strain is heard, just heard
From some far shore, the final chorus sounding.
O the blest eyes, the happy hearts
That see, that know the guiding thread so fine
Along the mighty labyrinth."

There speaks the poet declaring the true faith, which except a man believe he is condemned everlastingly to the outer darkness. His task is selective. No matter about the murkiness of the cloud he must make us see the ray of perfect light. In the mad Babel-din he must hear and repeat the strain of pure music. As to the field of choice, it may be as wide as the world, but he must choose as a poet, and not after the manner of the man with the muck-rake.

"In this broad earth of ours
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
Inclosed and safe within the central heart
Nestles the seed perfection."

When the poet delves in the grossness and the slag, he does so as one engaged in the search for the perfect.

"My feeling," says the Gentle Reader, "about the proper material for poetry, is very much like that of Whitman in regard to humanity —

'When warrantee deeds loafe in chairs opposite, and are my friendly companions,
I intend to reach them my hand and make as much of them as I do of men and women like you.'

"So I say, when drain pipes and cross-cut saws and the beef on the butcher's stalls are invested with beautiful associations and thrill my soul in some mysterious fashion, then I will make as much of these things as I do of the murmuring pines and the hemlocks. When a poet makes bank clerks and stevedores and wood-choppers to loom before my imagination in heroic proportions, I will receive them as I do the heroes of old. But, mind you, the miracle must be actually performed; I will not be put off with a prospectus."

Now and then the miracle is performed. We are made to feel the romance that surrounds the American pioneer, we hear the

"Crackling blows of axes sounding musically, driven by strong arms."

But, for the most part, Whitman, when under

the influence of deep feeling, forgets his theory, and uses as his symbols those things which have already been invested with poetical associations. Turn to that marvelous dirge, "When Lilacs last in the Dooryard bloomed." There is here no catalogue of facts or events, no parade of glaring realism. Tennyson's "sweet sad rhyme" has nowhere more delicious music than we find in the measured cadence of these lines. We are not told the news of the assassination of Lincoln as a man on the street might tell it. It comes to us through suggestion. We are made to feel a mood, not to listen to the description of an event. There is symbolism, suggestion, color mystery. We inhale the languorous fragrance of the lilacs; we see the drooping star; in secluded recesses we hear "a shy and hidden bird" warbling a song; there are dim-lit churches and shuddering organs and tolling bells, and there is one soul heart-broken, seeing all and hearing all.

"Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to keep, for the dead I loved so well,
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands — and this for his dear sake,
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim."

This is real poetry, and yet while we yield to the charm we are conscious that it is made up of the old familiar elements.

Tennyson's apology to a utilitarian age was not needed: —

> "Perhaps some modern touches here and there
> Redeemed it from the charge of nothingness."

The "modern touches" we can spare. The modern life we have always with us; but it is a rare privilege to enjoy the best things of the past. It is the poet who is the minister of this fine grace. The historian tells us what men of the past did, the philosopher tells us how their civilizations developed and decayed; we smile at their superstitions, and pride ourselves upon our progress. But the ethereal part has vanished, that which made their very superstitions beautiful and cast a halo over their struggles. These are the elements out of which the poet creates his world, into which we may enter. In the order of historic development chivalry must give way before democracy, and loyalty to the king must fade before the increasing sense of liberty and equality; but the highest ideals of chivalry may remain. Imaginative and romantic poetry

has this high mission to preserve what otherwise would be lost. It lifts the mind above the daily routine into the region of pure joy. Whatever necessary changes take place in the world we find, in

> "All lovely tales which we have heard or read,
> An endless fountain of immortal drink,
> Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink."

I have said that one may be a true poet without having any very important thought to communicate, but it must be said that most of the great poets have been serious thinkers as well. They have had their philosophy of life, their thoughts about nature and about human duty and destiny. It is the function of the poet not only to create for us an ideal world and to fill it with ideal creatures, but also to reveal to us the ideal element in the actual world.

"I do not know what poetical is," says Audrey. "Is it honest in deed and word? Is it a true thing?" We must not answer with Touchstone: "No, truly! for the truest poetry is the most feigning."

The poetical interpretation of the world is not

feigning; it is a true thing, — the truest thing of which we can know. The grace and sublimity which we see through the poet's eyes are real. We must, however, still insist on our main contention. The poet, if he is to hold us, must always be a poet. His thought must be in solution, and not appear as a dull precipitate of prose. He may be philosophical, but he must not philosophize. He may be moral, but he must not moralize. He may be religious, but let him spare his homilies.

"Whatever the philosopher saith should be done," said Sir Philip Sidney; "the peerless poet giveth a perfect picture of it. He yieldeth to the power of the mind an image of that of which the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description. . . . The poet doth not only show the way, but doth give so sweet a prospect unto the way as will entice any man to enter it. Nay, he doth as if your journey should lie through a fair vineyard, at first give you a cluster of grapes."

We have a right to ask our poets to be pleasant companions even when they discourse on the highest themes. Even when they have theories

of their own about what we should enjoy, let us not allow them to foist upon us "wordish descriptions" of excellent things instead of poetry. When the poet invites me to go with him I first ask, "Let me taste your grapes."

You remember Mr. By-ends in the "Pilgrim's Progress," — how he said of Christian and Hopeful, "They are headstrong men who think it their duty to rush on in their journey in all weathers, while I am for waiting for wind or tide. I am for Religion when he walks in his silver slippers in the sunshine." That was very reprehensible in Mr. By-ends, and he richly deserved the rebuke which was afterward administered to him. But when we change the subject, and speak, not of religion, but of poetry, I confess that I am very much of Mr. By-ends' way of thinking. There are literary Puritans who, when they take up the study of a poet, make it a point of conscience to go on to the bitter end of his poetical works. If they start with Wordsworth on his "Excursion," they trudge on in all weathers. They *do* the poem, as when going abroad they do Europe in six weeks. As the revival hymn says, "doing is a deadly thing." Let me say, good

Christian and Hopeful, that though I admire your persistence, I cannot accompany you. I am for a poet only when he puts on his singing robes and walks in the sunshine. As for those times when he goes on prosing in rhyme from force of habit, I think it is more respectful as well as more pleasurable to allow him to walk alone.

Shelley's definition of poetry as "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds" suggests the whole duty of the reader. All that is required of him is to obey the Golden Rule. There must be perfect reciprocity and fraternal sympathy. The poet, being human, has his unhappy hours, when all things are full of labor. Upon such hours the Gentle Reader does not intrude. In their happiest moments they meet as if by chance. In this encounter they are pleased with one another and with the world they live in. How could it be otherwise? It is indeed a wonderful world, transfigured in the light of thought. Familiar objects lose their sharp outlines and become symbols of universal realities. Likenesses, before unthought

of, appear. Nature becomes a mirror of the soul, and answers instantly to each passing mood. Words are no longer chosen, they come unbidden as the poet and his reader

> "mount to Paradise
> By the stairway of surprise."

# PROSE AND POETRY
## FOR CHILDREN

BY

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# ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE.

Prehistoric literature was undoubtedly poetic in form. Our vision of the first literary artist is of a man rather old, who journeyed from patriarchal family to patriarchal family, or from hamlet to hamlet, carrying to man the only formal message of those times; for in the primitive there was but one means of literary dissemination—by word of mouth. Just how the old bard presented his theme it is difficult to picture. It is certain he was an adept at oral expression. The rhythm of his lines he chanted and rechanted 'till it became the essense of song, and the music of his voice he accompanied with the lyre or the harp which he himself played. When he sang he took great care in enunciation; for to make himself clearly understood was very necessary. Combined with all these agencies of expression the primitive bard was a master of the art of gesture. But gesture, then, was not as we understand it now. Not only movement of hand and arm and not only facial expression, but every muscle of the body was brought into play and through its movement, made to aid in the expression of the thought. Thus the bard used the combined arts of music, the recitative, and expressive bodily action.

To the people of the patriarchal camp or the hamlet the tales of the bard took the place of newspaper, magazine, drama, book, library, lecture, reading-club. His advent was looked to as the sole source of news and discussion. He was the only professional purveyor of information.

Thus his art became the starting point of the world's literary life. From it was finally differentiated all the various literary forms as we now know them. It may be

assumed that love, war and the gods were in the main the themes of the Bard-stories. No doubt the bard learned to adjust his song to the love-lorn, to the hunter or soldier, or to the religious devotee; or perhaps the lover or warrior or prophet himself turned bard, and so had his own peculiarly colored tale to sing or tell. Thus gradually the bard-story became differentiated. Music more fittingly adorned the expression of certain passions and thus the resultant became lyrical; or other stories abounded in strong action, and the bard, with his followers, gave himself up to the most violent rhythmical physical contortions; and so gesture became the prevailing element in the expression, and thus the dramatic-story developed.

Again the pure recitative prevailed to the greater or less exclusion of the music and action elements, and the tale became more truly epic.

Thus from the primitive bard-matrix has been shaped modern poetry. At the same time it must be remembered, no piece of literature is truly poetic in which any of the ancient elements is lacking. Every true poem has music; it advances an idea, and is dramatic.

The more modern bard of which Sir Walter Scott tells in the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" and "The Lady of the Lake," is a partial survival of the ancient bard. Allan-Bane is both poet and prophet; but one must believe that the old man's dependence on the Douglass family was not at all characteristic of the untrammeled life of the ancient musician who was free from alliances with particular towns or hamlets or families, and traveled to the end of his life bearing his message of love or war. Scott, however, rang down the curtain on the life-play of the last of the bards; bidding him adieu in words that are as sure of immortality as any Scott wrote:

The way was long, the wind was cold,
The minstrel was infirm and old;
His withered cheek, and tresses gray,
Seemed to have known a better day;
The harp, his sole remaining joy,
Was carried by an orphan boy.
The last of all the bards was he,
Who sang of border chivalry;
For, well-a-day! their date was fled,
His tuneful brethren all were dead;
And he, neglected and oppressed,
Wished to be with them, and at rest.
No more, on prancing palfrey borne,
He caroled light as lark at morn;
No longer courted and caressed,
High placed in hall, a welcome guest,
He poured, to lord and lady gay,
The unpremeditated lay;
Old times were changed, old manners gone,—
A stranger filled the Stuart's throne;
The bigots of the iron time
Had called his harmless art a crime.
A wandering harper, scorned and poor,
He begged his bread from door to door;
And tuned, to please a peasant's ear,
The harp a king had loved to hear.

There is a striking analogy between the line of development of the child, in its attitude to literature, and that of the race. The race's first appreciation is of rhythm; so is the child's. Jack London, the novelist, in "Before Adam" gives his idea of the primitive race's first invention of a piece as follows:

"We were very angry, insanely, vociferously angry. Beating our chests, bristling, and gnashing our teeth, we gathered together in our rage. We felt the prod of gregarious instinct, the drawing together as though for united action, the impulse toward co-operation. In dim ways this need for united action was impressed upon us. But there was no way to achieve it because there was no way to express it. We did not turn to, all of us, and destroy Red-Eye, because we lacked a vocabulary. We were vaguely thinking thoughts for which there were no thought symbols. These thought-symbols were yet to be slowly and painfully invented.

"One after another of us joined in the orgy of rage, until even old Marrow-Bone was mumbling and sputtering with his cracked voice and withered lips. Some one seized a stick and began pounding a log. In a moment he had struck a rhythm. It had a soothing effect upon us; and before we knew it, our rage forgotten, we were in the full swing of a hee-hee council.

"But we Folk of the Younger World lacked speech, and whenever we were so drawn together we precipitated babel, out of which arose a unanimity of rhythm that contained within itself the essentials of art yet to come. It was art nascent.

"In the intervals of pandemonium, each chattered, cut up, hooted, screeched, and danced, himself sufficient unto himself, filled with his own ideas and volitions to the exclusion of all others, a veritable centre of the universe, divorced for the time being from any unanimity with the other universe-centres leaping and yelling around him.

"Then would come the rhythm—a clapping of hands; the beating of a stick upon a log; the example of one that leaped with repetitions; or the chanting of one that uttered explosively and regularly, with inflection that

rose and fell, 'A-bang, a-bang! A-bang, a-bang!' One after another of the self-centred Folk would yield to it, and soon all would be dancing or chanting in chorus. 'Ha-ah, ha-ah, ha-ah!" was one of our favorite choruses, and another was, 'Eh-wah, eh-wah-hah?'"

The Anglo-Saxon poem, "Beowulf," with its complicated alliteration, is an illustration of how strongly pure rhythm appealed to the younger man. But rhythmic pieces hung only in the borderland between the prehistoric and civilization for, with the dawn of intelligence, the drift was into myth and story or literature in which action and imagination were recorded. So presently, in English literature, the poem loses, to a certain extent, its strongly emphasized lyric cast, and becomes the recitation of a dramatic story, such as is seen in Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales."

Lastly the poem passes even out of the story epoch into the descriptive or narrative, the poetry of thought and philosophy. That this racial development is, in a general way, an indication of the line along which the child develops we shall now see.

All of us know well the child's instinctive love for the "Mother Goose Melody." A close study of the little one to determine what there is in the melody to attract shows it at once to be rhythm. What is suggested in thought is found to be nothing more than a series of striking pictures which are easily grasped by the senses; while the action is fantastic.

When the age of appreciation of the jingle is well under way, there is an unconscious trend into a new field in which the pieces are a combination of prose and poetic. "The House that Jack Built" is the type of these. The chief characteristic is repetition. The separate sentences are in truth prose but in course of repeating and re-re-

peating become more or less poetic. Besides the placing of rhyme; e. g., "the priest all shaven and shorn, that married the man all tattered and torn, that kissed the maiden all forlorn," as well as the alliteration, gives further rhythmical effect. It is to be noted that the many repetitions of the same words are of distinct educational value to the child as distinct pronunciation of and familiarity with the words are thereby insured.

In "The Old Woman and Her Pig" the prose element still more fully prevails, yet the recurrence of the jingle still gives all the charm of the mother-goose melody. The story beginning "A mouse in the oven was spinning blue wool" in the "Stepping Stones" Readers, is another example of this class of children's literature. These prose-rhythms make an easy step into the appreciation of the prose of the reading-book, as they lie on the borderland of myth and story.

Throughout the kindergarten and primary years, rhythm continues to be the chief element in poetry attractive to the pupil.

So strong is the instinct for music that the six-year-old may be taught to memorize pieces far beyond his years in thought and emotion. Teachers, therefore, often deceive themselves into thinking their classes fully appreciate such poems as "The Children's Hour" (Longfellow), and "The Little Boy Blue" (Field), because of certain incidental childish ideas in the poems; but this apparent interest of the children is the inborn love of childhood for exquisite poetic music. The attempting of work thus in thought and action beyond the child's mental capacity, leads to arrested development. The teacher should watch carefully the materials and should select not only the rhythmical, but that which combines the rhythmical with childish experience.

One of the daintiest conceptions, "Daisies," by Frank Dempster Sherman, is illustrative:

At evening when I go to bed
I see the stars shine overhead;
They are the little daisies white
That dot the meadow of the night.

And often while I'm dreaming so,
Across the sky the moon will go;
It is a lady, sweet and fair,
Who comes to gather daisies there.

For, when at morning I arise,
There's not a star left in the skies;
She's picked them all, and dropped them down
Into the meadows of the town.

Note, also, that the rhythm of the following lines by Charles Warren Stoddard, "The Voice of the Mission Bell," imitating the ringing of a bell, is to the point:

And every note of every bell
Sang Gabriel, rang Gabriel,
In the tower left the tale to tell
Of Gabriel, the Archangel.

Again the tender love childhood has for animals is a most fruitful suggestion of material for the reading or memory lesson. Thus "Kittie and Mouse", "Mary Had a Little Lamb", "The Owl and the Pussy Cat" and "The Tree Toad", and others, carry the child into this real realm of his play life. The following poems are much beloved by the little ones:

## KITTIE AND MOUSE.

Once there was a little kittie,
White as the snow;
In a barn she used to frolic,
Long time ago.

In the barn a little mousie
Ran to and fro;
And it saw the little kittie
Long time ago.

Four soft paws had little kittie,
Paws soft as snow;
And they caught the little mousie
Long time ago.

Nine pearl teeth had little kittie —
All in a row,
And they caught the little mousie
Long time ago.

When the teeth bit the little mousie
Mousie cried out, "Oh"
But it got away from little kittie
Long time ago.

## DAPPLE GRAY.

I had a little pony;
His name was Dapple Gray.
I lent him to a lady,
To ride a mile away.

She whipped him, she lashed him,
She rode him through the mire;
I would not lend my pony now
For all the lady's hire.

## SLEEP, BABY, SLEEP.

Sleep, baby, sleep,
Thy father's watching the sheep,
Thy mother's shaking the dreamland tree
And down drops a little dream for thee.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

Sleep, baby, sleep!
The big stars are the sheep;
The little stars are the lambs, I guess,
The bright moon is the shepherdess,
Sleep, baby, sleep!

## LITTLE BIRDIE.

What does little birdie say,
In her nest at peep of day?
"Let me fly," says little birdie—
"Mother, let me fly away."
"Birdie, rest a little longer,
Till the little wings are stronger."
So she rests a little longer,
Then she flies away.

What does little baby say
In her bed at peep of day?
Baby says, like little birdie,
"Let me rise and fly away."
"Baby, sleep a little longer,
Till the little limbs are stronger."
If she sleeps a little longer,
Baby, too, shall fly away.

—*Alfred Tennyson.*

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## THE VOICE OF THE DOVE.

Come, listen, O Love, to the voive of the dove,
Come, hearken and hear him say;
There are many To-morrows, my Love, my Love,
There is only one To-day!

And all day long you can hear him say
This day in purple is rolled,
And the baby stars of the milky way
They are cradled in cradles of gold.

Now what is thy secret, serene gray dove,
Of singing so sweetly alway?
"Many To-morrows, my Love, my Love,
Only one To-day, To-day!

—*Joaquin Miller.*

(Permission of the author, The Whitaker and Ray Co., Publishers.)

Children's poetry in the kindergarten and largely in the primary grades falls as regards subject-matter under two heads, the "wonder-poem" and the "make-believe-poem."

Good examples of these are respectively, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," and "Winter Jewels."

## THE STAR.

Twinkle, twinkle, little star;
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky!

When the glorious sun is set,
And the grass with dew is wet,
Then you show your little light,
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.

In the dark blue sky you keep,
And often through my curtains peep;
For you never shut your eye
Till the sun is in the sky.

As your bright and tiny spark
Lights the traveler in the dark,
Though I know not what you are,
Twinkle, twinkle, little star.

The child wonder-poem has arisen from a desire to express in music the numberless thrills the boy or girl feels as nature or life unfolds its newness to him. Thus,

There are three green eggs in a small round pocket,
And the breeze will swing and the gale will rock it,
Till three little birds on the thin edge teeter,
And our God will be glad and the world be sweeter!

(By permission from Edwin Markham. McClure Phillips & Co., Publishers.)

is a joyous childish revel in the window-bird-nest,—an illustration of ever-recurring delight that even the adult has as he looks into the home of the bird.

Thus it becomes the duty of the teacher to be sensitive to the touches of emotion that seize the children as the mysteries of art and nature are unfolded to them, to the end that the poetry given may nurture and strengthen the tender impression of the pupil. Thus

## WINTER JEWELS.

A million little diamonds
Sparkled in the trees,
And all the little maidens said,
"A jewel if you please;"
But when they held their hands outstretched
To catch the diamonds gay,
A million little sunbeams came
And stole them all away,

is appropriate to the dewy spring morning; just as Jean Ingelow's "Seven Times One" in the "Songs of Seven" is expressive of the child-delight in outward things.

There's no dew left on the daisies and clover,
  There's no rain left in heaven;
I've said my "seven times" over and over;
  Seven times one are seven.

I am old, so old, I can write a letter;
  My birthday lessons are done;
The lambs play always, they know no better;
  They are only one times one.

O moon! in the night I have seen you sailing
  And shining so round and low;
You were bright! ah bright! but your light is failing,—
  You are nothing now but a bow.

You moon, have you done something wrong in heaven
  That God has hidden your face?
I hope if you have you will soon be forgiven,
  And shine again in your place.

O velvet bee, you're a dusty fellow,
  You've powder'd your legs with gold!
O brave marshmary buds, rich and yellow,
  Give me your money to hold!

O Columbine, open your folded wrapper,
  Where two twin turtle-doves dwell!
O cuckoopint, toll me the purple clapper
That hangs in your clear, green bell!

And show me your nest with the young ones in it;
  I will not steal them away;
I am old! you may trust me, linnet, linnet,—
  I am seven times one to-day.

## FOR THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES.

The intermediate years of school conform in a general way to the period of child-life known to physiologists as "childhood proper." This runs approximately (varying in different children) from eight to eleven in girls, and from eight to twelve in boys. As it is an age of great physical activity, so it is also an age of great mental activity, which manifests itself in exercise of the imagination. In the earlier part of the period the child is adjusting himself, preparatory to the later rational thought processes, through the process of fantastic imagination. Hence the myth and the story begin here to be attractive. Later all sorts and forms of adventure, and exciting contests are the sources of his mental food.

It is not strange then that his taste for the poetic in this period is far different from what it was in the pre-

vious period. If we should characterize the literature which the pupils best react on at this age, we should call it the heroic, and should perhaps name the good old production of Mrs. Felicia Hemans, "Casabianca," as the type. It may be objected that the "Boy on the Burning Deck" stands for that irrational bravery which is not just the thing to put before the child. This point is open to argument; but the spirit of obedience and respect pictured in the poem commends itself in an age when the young appear too self-willed.

The story of "Paul Revere's Ride" also presents a phase of heroism which touches the boy, especially him who has been fired by reading the stirring times beginning the American Revolution. "Barbara Fritchie" has, too, the mark of the heroic as has "The Charge of the Light Brigade," though these belong to the latter part of the period under consideration.

James T. Field's "The Tempest," for the lower years of intermediate, and Browning's "The Ride from Ghent to Aix," for upper, are two additional heroics which linger long with the child who reads them.

## FOR THE GRAMMAR GRADES.

The seventh and eighth grades are co-ordinate with the physiological period in the child's growth known as youth. It is in this age that the pupil's emotional life begins to expand, for this is when he loses the spontaneity of earlier years and awakes to life's problems. The subject-matter, therefore, suited to this age, is that which reacts upon the emotional nature and gives control to the child. A love of direct didactic statement of the truth begins to dove-tail with the love of the dramatic of ear-

lier period. Description and narrative become satisfying. The child loves epigram and proverb, and in short any piece that has a definite clear lesson to teach. An example is seen in Markham's "The Father's Business."

Who puts back into place a fallen bar,
Or flings a rock out of a traveled
His feet are moving toward the central star,
His name is whispered in the God's abode.

(Permission of the author, McClure, Phillips & Co., Publishers.)

In the method pursued in upper grades, the aim should be to make the pupil think. Consequently the piece must be dwelt upon, mused over, until its entire setting is visualized and its atmosphere felt.

Suppose, for example, the poem under consideration is "Two Taverns," by Markham:

I remember how I lay
On a bank a summer day,
Peering into weed and flower;
Watched a poppy all one hour;
Watched it 'till the air grew chill;
In the darkness of the hill:
'Till I saw a wild bee dart
Out of the cold to the poppy's heart;
Saw the petals gently spin,
Shut the little lodger in.

Then I took the quiet road
To my own secure abode.
All night long his tavern hung;

Now it rested, now it swung;
I asleep in steadfast tower,
He asleep in stirring flower;
In our hearts the same delight
In the hushes of the night;
Over us both the same dear care
As we slumbered unaware.

(Permission of the author, McClure, Phillips and Co., Publishers.)

The first of these stanzas is pure description, so the attention of the teacher should be given to bringing out a clear visualization of the scene depicted.

One might think that the teaching of this poem to children in a country where the poppy does not grow, should not be undertaken. But it will be remembered that the incident of the petals of a flower closing at eve around an insect could happen with many another flower; so that a vivid paraphrase by the teacher of the stanza, putting some flower that the children know for the poppy, will bring about the desired understanding.

The striking contrast subtly suggested in the second stanza between the poet resting in his "steadfast tower," and the bee asleep in a stirring flower, and the idea growing out of it—the natural simple faith which abounds in life—may be made more vivid by comparing the poem with "The Sandpiper" and "The Waterfowl."

It should be said once for all that no literary quotation is of much value unless it is placed in the mind with the group of ideas to which it is naturally related. Ideas are arranged so that we can remember them by thinking them together, thus:

"And are we not God's children both
Thou, little sandpiper and I?"

*and*

"Over us both the same dear care
As we slumbered unaware,"

*and*

"He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will guide my steps aright,"

are different expressions of the same idea, and all can readily be recalled whenever the central idea, the protecting All-father, is thought of.

The ability to thus *think ideas together* gives one's thought a literary cast.

The "Daffodils" (Wordsworth) is another piece consisting in the first stanzas mainly of description which later is idealized into what, to the poet, is a tender, exquisite memory. When sympathetically interpreted, it strikes the older children with great beauty. The approach to the poem is perhaps best made through a description of Wordsworth's attitude to nature, and his habit of wandering by himself through the hills. It was on one of these wanderings that he came across the scene the verse describes. The first line it should be noted is auto-biographical:

"I wandered lonely as a cloud"

for the poem is a faithful reproduction of an experience.

It will be noted an actual knowledge of the daffodil is not really necessary to an appreciation of the poem. The individual flower is a small part of the whole scene. The poet has stood apart, has perhaps just arrived at the sum-

mit of a divide, and is looking down into the valley at a lake bordered with trees, under which is a mass of dancing color. Whether this color be from a myriad of daffodils or of poppies, or anemones, or buttercups, the effect is the same. Bayard Taylor tells us when, upon a certain time, a regiment of soldiers sang an old love song, that

> "Each heart recalled a different name,
> But all sang Annie Laurie."

So it is when we read, while we say "daffodils" it is very possible that the mind's eye sees marguerites or yellow violets, or some other flower we have seen growing en masse.

It must be remembered that the culminating effect which makes poetry cling in the mind, is the rhythm. This should be brought out with all attention to the retard and acceleration, harmonic or melodic effect, necessary to bring out the thought; for that reading of a good poem which best brings out the rhythm will best reveal the thought. Notice especially the effect of the retard in the line:

> "I *gazed* and *gazed,* but little thought."

Notice also the emotion comes to a climax in the last couplet:

> "And then my heart with pleasure fills,
> And dances with the daffodils."

In fine, it may be said, that *teaching by impression* can be used at its best in this presentation of poetry in the grades, for in some subtle, not well understood way, the successful teacher communicates her own appreciation of the emotion to the pupil.

# HUMOR.

From the world of make-belief there is an easy step to the humorous. The make-believe becomes mirth-provoking as soon as absurdity of situation can be realized. In the little child whose power to think has not yet been tried out on the wings of imagination the absurdities do not appear. Hence Edward Lear's "The Owl and the Pussy Cat" may appear a serious reality to such a one; but after a while the fantastic oddities appear and the humor is enjoyed.

It is certain that the power to appreciate humor does not appear till the child can reason well. Hence the full beauty is not evident till the little one is well along in the grades. Eugene Field's "The Duel" appeals more humorously to younger children than perhaps any other poem. Close to this ranks Stevenson's "A Birdie With a Yellow Bill." Riley's "The Tree-Toad" herewith given in full, is a type of the piece in which childish make-belief is tempered into delicious fun.

"Scurious-like," said the tree-toad,
"I've twittered fer rain all day;
And I got up soon,
And I hollered 'till noon—
But the sun, hit blazed away,
'Till I jest clumb down in a crawfish-hole,
Weary at heart, and sick at soul!

"Dozed away fer an hour,
And I tackled the thing again;
And I sung, and sung,
'Till I knowed my lung
Was jest about give in;
And then, thinks I, ef hit don't rain now
There're nothin' in singin' anyhow!

"Once in awhile some
  Would come a drivin' past
And he'd hear my cry,
And stop and sigh—
  'Till I jest laid back, at last.
And hollered rain 'till I thought my th'oat
Would bust right open at ever' note!

"But I fetched her! O I fetched her!
  'Cause a little while ago,
As I kind o' set,
With one eye shet,
  And a-singin' soft and low,
A voice drapped down on my fevered brain,
Sayin',—'Ef you'll jest hush I'll rain!'"

—*James Whitcomb Riley.*

(With the permission of Bowen-Merrill Co., Publishers.)

The pun requires the exercise of so fine a discrimination in the use of words that, except in the higher grades, the poem depending for its amusement upon, does not appeal. Many a child who at twelve or thirteen has tried to read Hood's "Faithless Nellie Gray," while perhaps understanding a few of the hits, waits 'till adulthood before he grins at the "Stake in His Inside," or "Badajo's Breaches," or

"The girl that loves a scarlet coat
Should be more uniform."

Good humor always carries with it an important lesson in that it makes us see ourselves as we see others. It therefore always is a gentle chiding. "Suppose" by Phoebe Cary well illustrates this influence of a humorous production,

Suppose, my little lady,
Your doll should break her head,
Could you make it whole by crying
'Till your eyes and nose are red?
And wouldn't it be pleasanter
To treat it as a joke,
And say you're glad "'twas Dolly's,
And not your head, that broke?"

Suppose you're dressed for walking,
And the rain comes pouring down,
Will it clear off any sooner
Because you scold and frown?
And wouldn't it be nicer
For you to smile than pout,
And so make sunshine in the house
When there is none without?

Suppose your task, my little man,
Is very hard to get,
Will it make it any easier
For you to sit and fret?
And wouldn't it be wiser
Than waiting, like a dunce,
To go to work in earnest,
And learn the thing at once?

Suppose that some boys have a horse,
And some a coach and pair,
Will it tire you less while walking
To say, "It isn't fair"?
And wouldn't it be nobler
To keep your temper sweet,
And in your heart be thankful
You can walk upon your feet?

And suppose the world don't please you,
Nor the way some people do,
Do you think the whole creation
Will be altered just for you?
And isn't it, my boy or girl,
The wisest, bravest plan,
Whatever comes or doesn't come,
To do the best you can?

—*Phoebe Cary.*

"The Fiddler from Dooney" by William Butler Yeats is a fine example of a humorous poem bearing a gentle moral:

When I play on my fiddle in Dooney,
Folks dance like a wave of the sea;
My cousin is priest in Kilvarnet,
My brother in Moharabuiee.

I passed my brother and cousin;
They read in their books of prayer;
I read in my book of songs
I bought at the Sligo fair.

When we come at the end of time,
To Peter sitting in state,
He will smile on the three old spirits,
But call me first through the gate.

For the good are always the merry
Save by an evil chance,
And the merry love the fiddle
And the merry love to dance.

And when the folk there spy me,
They will all come up to me,
With "Here is the fiddler of Dooney!"
And dance like a wave of the sea.

(By permission of The Macmillan Co., Publishers.)

Closely allied to humorous poetry and most useful in the school-room for touching the uninitiated in lower grades, and giving them an initiatory experience with verse, is the rhythmed puzzle or riddle illustrated in the following stanzas:

"Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall;
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
Not all the king's horses, nor all the king's men
Could put Humpty Dumpty together again."

"Little Nanny Etticott,
In a white petticoat,
And a red rose;
The longer she stands,
The shorter she grows."

From the rhymed riddle, the step is easy to the verse in which the figure is simply and plainly symbolic; for it often requires the same effort of mind to interpret the quaint figure of speech as it does the puzzle, as in the following:

"Kind hearts are the gardens,
Kind thoughts are the roots,
Kind words are the blossoms,
Kind deeds are the fruits."

Again the verse containing the humorous play on words, or other striking conceits, adds to the interest

especially of older pupils. Of the following two, the first quatrain is as old as Greek literature; the second young as the modern magazine:

"A countryman once who was troubled with fleas
Jumped out of bed with a thundering breeze,
And triumphantly cried, as he blew out the light;
'Now I've got you, you rogue, you can't see where to bite.'"

"O never tell your secrets to a fish
Whatever else you do;
For fishes carry tales, you know,
And they might tell on you."

—*Field.*

(Permission of the "Sunset Magazine.")

These skits serve as spice and react pleasantly upon the usually serious atmosphere of the schoolroom. The list may be extended ad libitum into carefully chosen jokes, conundrums and so forth.

## THE VALUE OF SYMBOLISM.

In the same way that a word may in the hand of the literary artist take on a new and varied meaning, which grows out of the resemblance of object to object; so a well known or commonplace thought expressed, not as a word, but in full sentences, may be given a new and significant meaning. Thus many times, in teaching, Christ spoke in parables.

The parable of the sower, while setting forth commonplace facts about the wheat field, was intended to tell the disciples that their work must some of it fail, other prosper.

The Allegory, Bunyan's "Pilgrims' Progress" for example, is an extended symbol, the experiences of Christian standing in the concrete as an embodiment of the trials of a follower of Christ. True poetic symbolism is the art of making one idea or series of ideas stand for another; thus in "Barnacles":

"My soul is sailing through the sea,
But the past is heavy and hindereth me,
The Past hath crusted cumbrous shells
That hold the flesh of cold sea-mells
About my soul.
The huge waves wash, the high waves roll,
Each barnacle clingeth and worketh dole
And hindereth me from sailing!

Old Past, let go, and drop i' the sea
Till the fathomless waters cover thee!
For I am living but thou art dead;
Though drawest back, I strive ahead
The Day to find,
Thy shells unbind! Night comes behind,
I needs must hurry with the wind
And trim me best for sailing."

The barnacles are put to concretely embody the abstract past. (From Poems of Sidney Lanier; copyright 1894, 1891, by Mary D. Lanier; published by Chas. Scribner's Sons.)

The intense power of symbolism lies in its power of suggestiveness. The mind grasps the clue to thought and from the clue develops the thought much more quickly than from the most direct presentation of the idea. Symbolism presents the glimmer leaving the mind to catch at the suggestion, e. g.:

"There was a door to which I found no key,
There was a veil past which I could not see,
Some little thought awhile of me and thee
There seemed, and then no more of thee and me;"

—*Omar Khayyam.*

*or*

"And the brooklet has found the billow
Though they flowed so far apart,
And has filled with its freshness and sweetness
That turbulent, bitter heart."

—*Longfellow.*

It is fundamental that the occult, the hidden, is a strong lure to the intellect. It ensnares the imagination and holds the fancy. More than that, it leads us to take our own peculiar personal attitude to those scenes and emotions which, if baldly or openly portrayed, would be inartistic. Thus the poet instead of "I am sick today, but tomorrow I will be well," might say, "The tide is out now, but it will soon be in again." So also it is said in biblical lore:

"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,"

*and*

"For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:"

because "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be which find it."

If the symbolic shows this strong appeal to the adult imagination, it is doubly attractive to the child—especially at the age when fancy is most active. Thus nature poetry in which the forces of nature are personified, or imagined to be other than what they are, has a natural place in the child's education.

"Winter Jewels" already quoted is illustrative and the following "The Voice of the Grass" by Sarah T. Roberts:

Here I come creeping, creeping everywhere;
By the dusty roadside,
On the sunny hillside,
Close by the noisy brook,
In every shady nook
I come creeping, creeping everywhere.

## NATURE POETRY.

Productions of this class fall under two heads: first, the pure description; secondly, that which is expressive of the feeling or emotion borne into the mind by nature as a symbol.

Of the first class, the stanza from "The Two Voices" by Tennyson, and the following two stanzas by Helen Hunt Jackson, are types:

"Today I saw the dragon fly
Come from the wells where he did lie.
An inner impulse rent the veil,
Of his old husk: from head to tail
Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.
He dried his wings: like gauze they grew;
Through crofts and pastures wet with dew,
A living flash of light he flew."

"The goldenrod is yellow;
The corn is turning brown;
The trees in apple orchards
With fruit are bending down.

The sedges flaunt their harvest,
In every meadow nook;
And asters by the brook-side
Make asters in the brook."

Lines so purely descriptive as this, and yet so beautiful are rare, for the description easily passes into the use of the natural to symbolize some mode or quality of the mind. Thus "The splendor falls on castle walls," while pure rhythm and description in the first two stanzas, in the third stanza,

"O love, they die in your rich sky,
They faint on hill and field and river;
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow forever and forever."

becomes by contrast a symbol leading to the expression of an ideal human quality.

In their attempts to describe dawn and the morning, the poets have on the other hand, often called in symbol. To Homer the dawn was so beautiful that he used the figure of woman to express it. "Rosy-fingered dawn" is the phrase chosen.

Chaucer, in describing the morning, speaks of the lark as the day's messenger:

"The busy lark, the messenger of day
Saluteth in her song the morrow gray;
And fiery Phoebus riseth up so bright
That all the orient laugheth of the light."

Shakespeare has two couplets in which morn is symbolized; in one as a youth, in the other as a maiden:

"Night's candles are burnt out and jocund day
Stands tie-toe on the misty mountain-top."

*and*

"But look, the morn in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill."

Tennyson has:

"Morn in the white wake of the morning star,
Came furrowing all the orient into gold."

Sterling has:

"Morn comes drifting on its golden tides."

When it is undertaken to embody the emotion aroused by certain aspects of nature, the nature quality becomes secondary to the human qualities the poet sees mirrored in the phenomena.

This results in such poetic conceptions, quoted later on, as Edwin Markham's "The Joy of the Hills," Herbert Bashford's "The Song of the Forest Ranger," Ina Coolbrith's "In Blossom Time," Barry Cornwall's "The Sea," and Robert Browning's lines from "Saul" beginning, "O our manhood's prime vigor" and ending, "Forever in Joy." These are the record of man's joy in nature.

The first mentioned is the type. It is later given in full. All these poems when interpreted with the rhythmic swing belonging to them will strongly appeal to the older children.

In a group by themselves are those verses which are supposedly attempts to reproduce the notes of certain birds. The "Song of the Brown Thrush" by Henry van Dyke, and "The Voice of the Dove" by Joaquin Miller are really reflections of bits of Philosophy which the author chooses to realize in the bird song, thus:

## THE SONG OF THE BROWN THRUSH.

Luck, luck,
What luck?
Good enough for me!
I'm alive, you see.
Sun shining,
No repining;
Never borrow
Idle sorrow;
Drop it!
Cover it up!
Hold your cup!
Joy will fill it,
Don't spill it,
Steady, be ready,
Good luck!

—*Henry van Dyke.*

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So also in "The Voice of the Dove" already quoted.

It should be remarked that only lines of the type of "Today I saw the dragonfly" are usually strictly interpreted as nature poetry. It is noticed that poems like the last two quoted, when literally construed ascribe to the birds powers of feeling and reason they do not posses. This quality of literature, however, is valuable as beautifully calling attention to the particular nature-object.

James Whitcomb Riley's lines beginning:

"Little brook Little brook!
You have such a happy look;
Such a very merry manner
As you swerve curve and crook!"

further illustrate the beauty of this kind of nature production. The following poems are striking as they combine with wonderful pictures of nature, wildness and swing of melody unrivaled.

## THE SEA.

The Sea! the Sea! the open Sea!
The blue, the fresh, the ever-free!
Without a mark, without a bound,
It runneth the earth's wide regions round;
It plays with the clouds, it mocks the skies;
Or like a cradled creature lies.

I'm on the sea! I'm on the sea!
I am where I would ever be;
With the blue above, and the blue below,
And Silence wheresoe'er I go;
If a storm should come and awake the deep,
What matter? I shall ride and sleep.

I love (oh! how I love) to ride
On the fierce foaming bursting tide,
When every mad wave drowns the moon,
Or whistles aloft his tempest tune,
And tells how goeth the world below.
And why the southwest blasts do blow.

I never was on the dull tame shore
But I loved the great sea more and more;
And backwards flew to her billowy breast,
Like a bird that seeketh it's mother's nest:
And a mother she was and is to me,
For I was born on the open Sea!

The waves were white, and red the morn,
In the noisy hour when I was born;
And the whale it whistled, the porpoise rolled,
And the dolphins bared their back of gold;
And never was heard such an outcry wild
As welcomed to life the Ocean-child!

I have lived since then, in calm and strife,
Full fifty summers a sailor's life,
With wealth to spend and a power to range,
But never have sought, nor sighed for change;
And death, whenever he come to me
Shall come on the wide unbounded Sea!

## THE JOY OF THE HILLS.

I ride on the mountain tops, I ride;
I have found my life and am satisfied.
Onward I ride in the blowing oats,
Checking the field-lark's rippling notes—
Lightly I sweep
From steep to steep:
Over my head through the branches high
Come glimpses of a rushing sky;
The tall oats brush my horse's flanks;
Wild poppies crowd on the sunny banks;
A bee booms out of the scented grass;
A jay laughs with me as I pass.

I ride on the hills, I forgive, I forget,
Life's hoard of regret—
All the terror and pain
Of the chafing chain.
Grind on, O cities, grind:
I leave you a blur behind.

I am lifted elate—the skies expand:
Here the world's heaped gold is a pile of sand.
Let them weary and work in their narrow walls:
I ride with the voices of waterfalls!
I swing on as one in a dream—I swing
Down the airy hollows, I shout, I sing!
The world is gone like an empty word:
My body's a bough in the wind, my heart a bird!

—*Edwin Markham.*

(By permission of the author, McClure Phillips & Co., Publishers.)

## IN BLOSSOM TIME.

It's O my heart, my heart,
To be out in the sun and sing—
To sing and shout in the fields about,
In the balm and the blossoming!

Sing loud, O bird in the tree;
O bird, sing aloud in the sky,
And honey-bees, blacken the clover seas—
There is none of you glad as I.

The leaves laugh low in the wind,
Laugh low, with the wind at play;
And the odorous call of the flowers all
Entices my soul away!

For O but the world is fair, is fair—
And O but the world is sweet!
I will out in the gold of the blossoming mould,
And sit at the Master's feet.

And the love my heart would speak,
I will fold in the lily's rim,
That the lips of the blossom, more pure and meek,
May offer it up to Him.

Then sing in the hedgerow green, O thrush,
O skylark, sing in the blue;
Sing loud, sing clear, that the king may hear,
And my soul shall sing with you!

—*Ina Coolbrith.*

(Permission of the author, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Publishers.)

## THE SONG OF THE FOREST RANGER.

Oh, to feel the fresh breeze blowing
From lone ridges yet untrod!
Oh, to see the far peak growing
Whiter as it climbs to God!

Where the silver streamlet rushes
I would follow—follow on
Till I heard the happy thrushes
Piping lyrics to the dawn.

I would hear the wild rejoicing
Of the wind-blown cedar tree,
Hear the sturdy hemlock voicing
Ancient epics of the sea.

Forest aisles would I be winding,
Out beyond the gates of Care;
And, in dim cathedrals, finding
Silence at the shrine of Prayer.

When the mystic night comes stealing
Through my vast, green room afar,
Never king had richer ceiling—
Bended bough and yellow star!

Ah, to list the sacred preaching
Of the forest's faithful fir,
With his strong arms upward reaching—
Mighty, trustful worshipper!

Come and learn the joy of living!
Come and you will understand
How the sun his gold is giving
With a great, impartial hand!

How the patient pine is climbing,
Year by year to gain the sky;
How the rill makes sweetest rhyming,
Where the deepest shadows lie.

I am nearer the great Giver,
Where His handiwork is crude;
Friend am I of peak and river,
Comrade of Old Solitude.

Not for me the city's riot!
Not for me the towers of Trade!
I would seek the house of Quiet,
That the Master Workman made!

—*Herbert Bashford.*

(Permission of the author, The Whitaker & Ray Co., Publishers.)

It must not be forgotten that many times poetry has an interesting relation to geography. Thus Lanier's "Song of the Chattahoochie," Joaquin Miller's introductory stanzas to "A Song of the South" (quoted later in "Some of the Treasures") may be read and interpreted in connection with a study of rivers. So also poetry addressed to the sea; e. g., Byron's "Apostrophe to the Ocean," or Barry Cornwall's "The Sea," may be used to instill emotions growing out of the study of various aspects of the sea. But such poems should be done after the child has something of a perspective of the subject matter he has mastered; in other words, after an impression of the river studied has become a memory. This means that the teacher has been able to give the children a touch of real knowledge on the subject to which the poem applies.

# THE ART of WRITING & SPEAKING the ENGLISH LANGUAGE

SHERWIN CODY

# HOW TO READ AND WHAT TO READ

## CHAPTER I.

### *WHAT CONSTITUTES A GOOD POEM?*

We may consider literature under three heads—Pure Poetry, the Prose Essay, and Fiction.

Poetry is unquestionably the oldest form of literature. Matthew Arnold once queried whether a people ought not to be barbarous to be really poetic. Perhaps it originated in the chant of the priests as they offered sacrifices to their gods; but the chanted tale recounting the deeds of glorious war must have come very soon after.

Mechanically, poetry consists in words arranged in measured feet and lines, corresponding almost exactly to the time element in music. Rhyme is a modern invention and in no way essential to poetry. Originally anything that could be chanted or sung was regarded as poetry. Now the song element has largely disappeared, but the requirement of measured feet and lines remains, and we may almost say that no poetry can be fully appreciated till it is read aloud.

Poetry was invented to express lofty sentiments,

sentiments of religion and the noble sentiments of patriotism and brave deeds, and finally the sentiments of passionate love. It is still the loftiest form of literature, and if we would seize at a grasp all the length and breadth of the highest literary art, we should begin with the study of poetry.

True literature should express equally Truth, Nobility, and Beauty, the intellectual, the ethical, and the esthetic. Of course one poem will be pre-eminent for its beauty, another for its nobility, a third for its truth. Let us examine various types, that we may see with our own eyes and feel with our own hearts what these words mean.

Read aloud this lullaby from Tennyson's *Princess*:

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
  Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
  Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
  Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one,
    sleeps.
Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
  Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
  Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
  Under the silver moon;
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one,
    sleep.

The first thing we notice, besides the pleasing rhythm, is the musical quality of the words. There can be no melody, as melody is known in music, but in the repetition of sounds and their enchanting variations we find something that very strongly suggests musical melody.

Then we are attracted by the beauty of the images. The words come tripping like fairy forms, and we feel a picture growing out of the *camera obscura* of our minds.

The appeal is almost wholly to our feelings; for if we stop to analyse the words and interpret their strict sense, we seem to see nothing but nonsense. The poem exists for the soothing, enchanting, dreamy beauty that seems rather to breathe in the words than to be expressed by them as words express thoughts in prose.

If there is any truth or any nobility in this poem of Tennyson's, it would be hard to say just what they are. There is nothing ignoble; there is nothing untrue. But it seems as if we had a perfect type of beauty pure and simple.

Now let us read this little thing from Shelley:

## LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY.

The fountains mingle with the river,
  And the rivers with the ocean;
The winds of heaven mix forever
  With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
  All things by a law divine

In one another's being mingle;—
  Why not I with thine?

See the mountains kiss high heaven,
  And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower would be forgiven,
  If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth,
  And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What are all these kissings worth,
  If thou kiss not me?

Once more we observe the rhythm and the music, though not so perfect or real as in Tennyson's song; and we see the beauty of images, almost as beautiful as the images in Sweet and Low; but we observe that there is a new element: a thought is expressed. Beauty has come to the aid of truth; and while we are uncertain whether we care most for the beauty or for the truth, we cannot but perceive how they aid each other.

But we have not yet found the moral or ethical element. Neither Tennyson nor Shelley inspires in us nobler sentiments, or gives us courage to do and dare loftier deeds.

For the purely ethical type we might turn to the psalms of David, or that noble poem Job. But we find the same element in a simple and modern form in a poem of Longfellow's.

## HOW AND WHAT TO READ

## A PSALM OF LIFE.

### WHAT THE HEART OF THE YOUNG MAN SAID TO THE PSALMIST.

Tell me not in mournful numbers,
"Life is but an empty dream!"
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real, life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
"Dust thou art, to dust returnest,"
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,—act in the living Present,
Heart within and God o'er head.

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,

And, departing, leave behind us
  Footprints on the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another
  Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
  Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
  With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
  Learn to labour and to wait.

Once more we observe how the musical flow of the language charms our ear, and how the poem makes us *feel* that which it would teach. We miss the vibrating melody of words which we found in Tennyson and even in Shelley; and the rarely beautiful images of both the preceding poems are almost entirely absent. There is another element, however, which we could not perceive at all in those verses, and that is the element of nobility, of moral inspiration. The poem does not teach us any moral truth with which we were before unfamiliar, as a treatise on philosophy might; but it makes us *feel* as nothing else ever has the reality of that which we know already. It actually breathes courage into us,—not the courage for heroic deeds in battle, but the heroism of living nobly the common life that is ours.

It is not fair to condemn this almost perfect poem, as some critics do, because it is lacking in the Beauty and fresh Truth that make the poems of

other poets immortal; for in the whole range of poetic literature it will be difficult to find a more perfect example of nobility and heroic courage.

It will be interesting now to turn to Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra* and find the philosophy, the Truth that corresponds to this Nobility.

VI.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
  Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joy three parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
  Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge
    the throe!

VII.

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
  Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
  A brute I might have been, but would not sink i'
    the scale.

*  *  *  *  *  *

XXIII.

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
  Things done that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
  Found straightway to its mind, could value in a
    trice:

XXIV.

But all the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
  So passed in making up the main account:
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
  That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

XXV.

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
  Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All men ignored in me,
  This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

The subject is almost precisely that of Longfellow's Psalm of Life, but the object is not so much to give us courage as to confirm our courage by philosophy. The appeal is intellectual, not ethical.

Yet this is very different from a treatise by Kant or Hegel. Browning the poet makes us *feel* the truth. It is emotion that his philosophy, his Truth, arouses in us—an intellectual emotion, but none the less an emotion. We find the measured rhythm of poetry, but it is as far as possible from the songlike music of Tennyson's lullaby. The mechanical limits and restrictions seem an excuse for unusual and almost strained images, but images that nevertheless

carry conviction to our minds. There is, too, a beauty in the conception. This poetry is philosophy, but impassioned and inspired philosophy.

Let us now read a poem still more lofty, a poem in which rare beauty, lofty nobility, and profound philosophy are mingled in almost equal proportions. I refer to Wordsworth's Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey:

These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even unto my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration. * * *
* * * that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things. * * *
And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,

And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

The sweet melody of Tennyson's lullaby has here given away to a deep, organ-like harmony, that swells and reverberates, while the words seem to be making the simplest and most direct of statements. Image and plain statement so mingle that we cannot distinguish them, Truth suddenly seems radiant with a rare and angelic Beauty, and the very atmosphere breathes the loftiness of Noble Purity. Unexpectedly almost we find ourselves in the presence of Divinity itself, and the humblest meets the loftiest on common ground.

# The Poets' Corner,

or

## Haunts and Homes of The Poets,

by



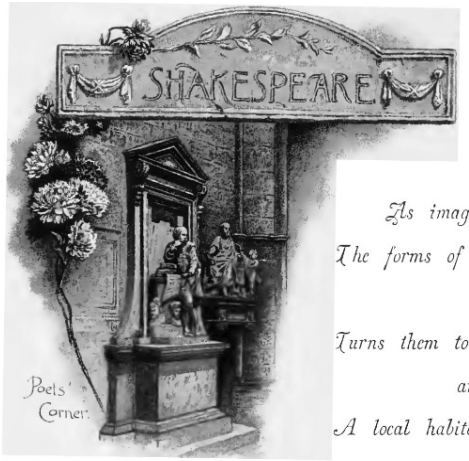

Illustrated by

Allan Barraud,

with

Introduction by

Fred E. Weatherly.



Poets' Corner.

*As imagination bodies forth*
*The forms of things unknown,*
*the poet's pen*
*Turns them to shapes,*
*and gives to airy nothing*
*A local habitation and a name.*

*"Midsummer Night's Dream."*

*How many goodly creatures*
*are there here!*
*How beauteous mankind is!*
*O brave new world,*
*That has such people in't!*

*"Tempest."*


H. Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-on-Avon



## The Poets' Corner.

*Where are the mighty poets gone?*
*Where are their burning spirits fled?*
*Is it beyond the stars and sun,*
*And do they sleep among the dead?*
*Or who will wake their songs again,*
*Or strike their silent harps once more,*
*And sing, in these sad days, a strain*
*Of chivalry and love of yore?*

*I tread the ways that know them still,*
*Where once they loved and sang of old,*
*The quiet glebe, the breezy hill,*
*The sunny bay, the wintry wold;*
*Churchyard and river, hall and tree,*
*Each has a story of its own;*
*But where can all the singers be,*
*Where have their burning spirits flown?*

*And then I tread the Abbey dust,*
*And scan the legends speaking fair,*
*The storied urn, the sculptured bust,*
*And think to find them sleeping there.*
*But no! They ask not such a bed,*
*Death hath for them no lot, or part,*
*The Poets live! They are not dead,*
*They live within their people's heart!*

Fred E. Weatherly.

# CHAUCER.

DEAR old England has a picturesque beauty of its own, in hill and dale, in moorland and purling stream; and this natural loveliness is enhanced by the charms of association. To the antiquarian, the historian, and the lover of literature, every inch of it is ground hallowed by the glorious deeds, sufferings, and achievements of men of genius, of the glorious company of martyrs who perished for their faith, and of warriors who bled for the cause they upheld. It is impossible to think of Warwickshire apart from Shakespeare, or of the Lake Country without recalling the sober figure of Wordsworth, while the mere mention of Surrey and Kent conjures up a vision of Geoffrey Chaucer, and of his merry calvacade of Canterbury pilgrims. The father of English poetry, however, was not country bred, London claims him for its own.

This soldier, courtier, man of learning, was, tradition says, born in Thames Street, and, if we accept his own statement, his birth occurred somewhere about the middle of the fourteenth century. Himself of gentle birth, his youth was spent in the atmosphere of the Court, as page to a Royal Duchess, and afterwards as valet to Edward III., with whom he was often at Woodstock, the Summer residence of the Royal Family. The glory of Woodstock has now departed; its great deer park, the incomparable maze in which Fair Rosamond's bower stood, the glades wherein the boy-poet walked and mused have vanished. It is in London that we must look for traces of Chaucer. When he held




the post of Controller of Customs, the poet lived in a house at Aldgate. We may picture to ourselves his hooded figure threading its way through the City's narrow lanes to the Postern Gate of the river by the Tower; passing through Fleet Street, along the Strand, and in every corner of the London of those days—a city of stately monasteries and hovels, of fortified mansions, and bishops' palaces surrounded by gardens, of churches, shops, and inns, from which hung innumerable signs. It is in Southwark that his figure seems to us most familiar. There stood the "Tabard Inn," the "gentil ostilrie," with its overhanging galleries supported by thick wooden pillars, its wide courtyard, and roomy guest chambers, whence the pilgrims started for Canterbury, to worship at Thomas à Becket's Tomb, one April morning of 1382.

Ruins of wayside chapels still mark their pleasant halting places. They stopped at Reigate, where the Town Hall stands on the site of one of these chapels. At Dorking, at the corner of Westhumble Lane, they found another, of which nothing now remains but a heap of moss-grown stones. Their route can be plainly traced by a line of yew trees, that winds up hill and down dale, through Surrey and Kent, and still indicates the "Pilgrims' Way." The trees do not grow in an unbroken line. Sometimes a clump of them forms a retreat, through whose shade the summer sun cannot pierce; sometimes a single tree, a spectre out of the past, flings its wild and twisted branches athwart the road; though here and there the yews grow in a long and orderly file. It was a gallant band that passed under the shadow of those hoary trees; "Well nine and twenty in a companie of Sondry folk." Among them rode a

"veray parfit gentil knight," with his young squire, who sang and played the flute all day, and

> "Embrouded was he—as it were a mede,
> Alle ful of freshe flouers white and rede."

A dainty prioress, whose smile "was ful simple and coy," was accompanied by a nun, "that was hire chapelleine and preestes three;" and the comely "wife of Bath," wearing hose of fine scarlet red and a "hat as broad as a buckler or a targe," rode among the Pilgrims. Thereafter comes a "gentil pardonere," a "wanton and a mery frere, an able abbot on his palfrey," a "fat swan loved he best of any roast;" and a lusty millar who

> "A baggepipe wel coude he blowe and soune,
> And therewithal he brought us out of toune."

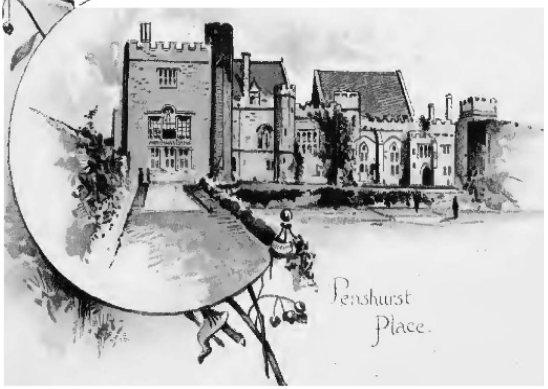
Prominent among them all is the poet's familiar figure leading the way. Let us imagine that the pilgrims have reached Canterbury; hot and dusty they enter Mercery Lane, that is crowded with traders in sacred wares. Before them rises the great cathedral, limned against the eternal freshness of the spring sky. They make their way through the lane, lined on either side with houses, the projecting upper storeys of which nearly meet above their heads. The old "Chequer Inn" stands at the corner of the High Street—every vestige of the inn has long since disappeared, its site, only, is known. The Pilgrims dismount; they enter the cathedral, through the church-yard, upon which now stands the beautiful angel-sculptured porch. Above the choir, reached by a flight of marble steps, and seen through a vista of columns, stands the shrine of the murdered Archbishop, blazing with gold and precious stones, and laden with offerings. Chaucer kneels, the print of his knees helps to wear away the pavement there. Doubtless the Prioress unpins that brooch on which is graven "Amor Vincit Omnia"; the wife of Bath detaches some jewel from her person; a sturdy franklin parts with one of the rings he wears outside his glove, and all the treasures are dropped into the shrine. There the



Chaucer Memorial Canterbury.

offerings will remain, until the day when Henry VIII will order the ashes of Thomas à Becket to be scattered to the winds, and the shrine to be despoiled. Blue Beard, we are told, carried off two heavy chests, and twenty-three carts full of treasure from the tomb. Torn stones and a worn pavement alone mark the spot where the shrine, stood five centuries ago; but the yew trees still point the way, and Chaucer's immortal poem still records that memorable journey.

The poet died before his work was completed. He expired on the 25th of October, 1400, in the house situated in the quiet garden of the Monks of St. Mary's, Westminster. Henry VII's. Chapel now covers the spot. Chaucer was interred in the cloister of the Abbey. In the sixteenth century, a poet, Nicholas Brigham, caused his remains to be removed to the south aisle, where he also erected a monument to the memory of Chaucer, the English troubadour.



Penshurst Place.

## SPENSER.

THE great "Kentish shrine," Penshurst, the home of the Sidneys, is closely associated with the name of Edmund Spenser. Every glade and alley of the park awake reminiscences of the poet. It was here he wrote the "Shepherd's Calendar." It is easy to realise how the stately surroundings and the characteristic beauty of Kent, the "Garden of England," gave the decisive moulding touches to Spenser's genius; and how fortunate it was that the formative period of his life should have been spent in such a house and in such a county. Such were the early environments which helped to shape his spirit to large issues. As we stand under "Sidney's Oak," we almost expect to see the poet and his host stroll across that grass-grown pleasance, under the shadow of the avenue of mighty limes and beeches, and make their way towards the venerable tree.

The house speaks eloquently to us of these noble youths. Every room seems to breathe of their presence and of their gentle ways of life. Lady Sidney's mandoline lies in one chamber; but little stretch of imagination is needed to hear a strain of ghostly music wandering through the gallery that is hung with portraits of a vanished race; or to see the feast laid on the master's raised table, in the Baron's hall, on whose walls glistens the armour of many a gallant Sidney, and of their kinsmen. The retainers are assembled, surely Spenser will shortly enter with the head of the house,

"The President of noblesse and of chevalrie."

A thrill of delight and surprise ran through the Court of Queen Elizabeth, when "The Shepherd's Calendar" was published. A new poet had arisen; no great national poet had appeared since Chaucer had passed into the silence nearly two hundred years before. Who was this Edmund




Spenser who once again drew such tender and flexible sweetness from the English tongue? Spenser was born in London, of poor parents. He was educated at "The Merchant Taylors' School," and entered Cambridge as a sizar, or serving clerk. He was an excellent Greek scholar, and had a thorough knowledge of the "natural and moral philosophy" of his day. In 1580, he was appointed secretary to Lord Arthur Grey de Wilton—the *Artegal* of the "Faerie Queene"—whom he accompanied to Ireland to aid in the suppression of the great Desmond uprising in that unhappy land. The English Government determined to plant Munster with English colonists; Kilcolman Castle and its woods and river were given to Spenser, and it was there he wrote "The Faerie Queene." The ruins of Kilcolman Castle now stand a solitary pile dominating a desolate moorland. In Spenser's time the scene must have possessed some grace, for he speaks of its pleasantness and celebrates—

"The green alders by Mulla's shore."

To the north stretched the wild country—half-bog, half-forest and the wooded hill of Aharlo.

"Of old the best and fairest hill
That was in all this Holy Island's heights.

In his day Aharlo had become the haunt of outlaws. At Kilcolman, surrounded by the ever present spectacle of desolation, of anarchy and woe, he wrote the adventures of the "Red Cross Knight;" and the poem is coloured and influenced by the author's surroundings and conditions of life. The mournful land is often traversed by his hero; the solitary tracks barren "both of man and beasts," and the "great woods," where danger lurked, and which Spenser paints in vivid words, form a picture of the Ireland of his day. The famished figures creeping out upon their

hands and knees, "for their legs could not bear them," he says, when describing the result of the wars in Munster, "speaking like ghosts rising out of their graves," inspired some of his weird fancies. Sir Walter Raleigh visited Spenser, and listened, under the shades of the green alders, to the first books of his host's great poem. At the persuasion of the dreamer of "Eldorado," the poet returned to England, and was introduced to Queen Elizabeth. She bestowed her brightest smile upon him, and accepted the dedication of the poem. It is difficult, now, to realise the enthusiasm that was aroused by the publication of the "Faerie Queene." It became "the delight of every accomplished gentleman, the model of every poet, the solace of every soldier." Spenser lingered awhile in England, then, finding, as *Colin Clout* explains, that the selfish intrigues of Court life are not suited to the meditations of a lowly shepherd swain, returned to Kilcolman Castle. A year or two later the smouldering discontent in Ireland was fanned anew into open rebellion. Out of the woods of Aharlo, wild figures flocked one night towards Kilcolman. To them, the sweet singer who dwelt there, was but a hated usurper. Spenser, at the time, was writing, or had just written, last words of holy meditation:

> "But, henceforth, all shall rest eternally,
> With him that is the God of Sabaoth hight;
> O! that great Sabaoth God, grant me that Sabbath's sight,"

when the rebels set fire to the Castle. Mystery hangs over the proceedings of that night of terror and anguish. Spenser escaped, with his wife and his children, with the exception of one newly-born babe, who perished in the flames. The poet arrived in England a ruined and a broken-hearted man, and died at an inn in King Street, Westminster. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, by Chaucer's side. The Earl of Essex defrayed the expenses of his funeral. "His hearse," says Camden, "was attended by poets; and mournful elegies and poems, with the pens that wrote them, were thrown into his tomb."

# SHAKESPEARE.

ONE of the few traditions that have been preserved of England's greatest poet relates of his passionate attachment to his native district, that even in the heyday of his career he visited Stratford-on-Avon at least once every year. In 1615 a proposal was made to enclose the adjacent common land of Welcombe. The poet appears to have been consulted on the subject, and, according to the preserved document "Mr. Shakespeare" told the agent "that he was not able to bear the enclosing of Welcombe." This midland district of England was for a youthful genius an ideal environment:

"With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd,
With plenteous rivers, and wide skirted meads."

The renowned Forest of Arden, "the highest franchise of noble and princely pleasure," and Charlecote Park, the scene of Shakespeare's reported deer-stealing exploits, are not far distant from Stratford, which was a prosperous important town in the end of the sixteenth century. Only one or two generations previous to the birth of the great dramatist, Warwickshire, and the neighbouring central counties of England had been torn asunder by civil dissensions, had been the battle ground of the prolonged Wars of the Roses. During his childhood many veteran soldiers or their immediate descendants were still alive, and doubtless filled the boy's greedy ears with stirring tales of fights and heroic deeds. It is this intimate knowledge of the struggles between Yorkists and Lancastrians which make his historical dramas the



best chronicles extant of that troublous time. The Royal residence of Woodstock was within easy reach of Stratford, so the youth must have been familiar with the pageantry of Court life long before he came into more personal contact with it in after life.

Shakespeare was endowed with deep insight into human nature, with broad sympathies, and, in addition to his vivid imagination, he possessed the invaluable faculty of learning through vicarious knowledge; so that his mind became a great storehouse from which he could draw endless material. His vast knowledge of men and manners was gained principally in England, although it is generally supposed that he visited foreign lands. Nevertheless, the people of his dramas are for the most part of English type; and his descriptions of Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Medieval Italy find their counterpart in Warwickshire and in London. His merchants, watchmen, gay revellers, nobles, frank-speaking, true-hearted ladies are the inhabitants of the London of Elizabeth. Doubtless he met Falstaff at the "Mermaid Tavern," and stood him many a glass of sack for love of his wit. There he exchanged sallies with Dame Quickly, and looked of a night through the dark streets for the glimmer of Dogberry's lantern. At the houses of his friends, Lord Southampton, Lord Pembroke, Lord Essex, he saw the flower of English Society, and among them, doubtless, the blithe gallant, the courtier Benedick, the gay Mercutio, Polonius, melancholy Jacques and grave Antonio. Perhaps he was one of the guests on the occasion when the Countess of Pembroke entertained Ben Jonson at Crosby House, and there met and talked with Portia, laughing Rosalind, and beautiful Imogen.

His own early courtship was the prototype of the many beautiful love episodes in his works, which culminate in the passion and tragic deaths of Romeo and Juliet. A rustic walk of a mile and a half lay between his father's house and the cottage of Ann Hathaway, who became his wife. The path he so often trod runs through fields and grassy lanes sweet in spring and summer with the perfume of hawthorn

and of wild roses. Hard by, beyond the line of trees, Shottery Brook gleams and ripples; and when the ardent lover went in quest of his mistress, he caught the first sight of her thatched-roof cottage as he crossed the wooden bridge over the tumbling cascade of the stream.

Stratford itself was, and is, a perfect model of an English country town. The perfect parish church, is itself an epitome of our history since the Norman Conquest. In Shakespeare's day the crypt or charnel-house, part of the original Saxon church still existed; and very similar to it "to whose foul mouth no loathsome air breathes in," was the vault that Juliet saw,

> "O'ercovered quite with dead men's rattling bones,
> With reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls."

In 1597 he bought the "Great House" for his wife and daughters to live in; thither he retired some years later, and there Drayton and Ben Jonson were entertained by him the day before his death. He was buried in the chancel of the church at Stratford, where his monument holds an honoured place on the north wall above the altar rails. Westminster Abbey also contains a monument in the Poets' Corner to the Immortal Bard, with an epitaph engraved on the pedestal by Ben Jonson.



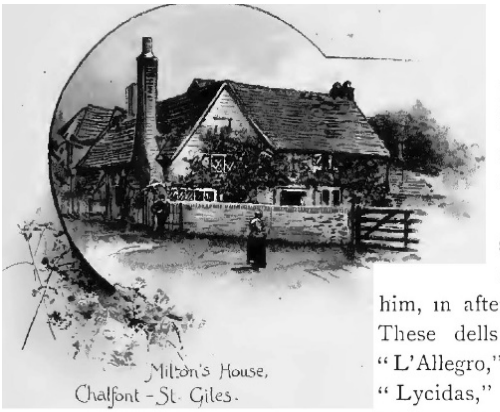

After Shakespeare's death that cynical but faithful friend wrote of him: "I loved the man, and do honour his memory on this side of idolatry as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature, had an excellent phantasy, brave notions and gentle expressions."

# MILTON.

DEAR, Cockney London, has been the birthplace of a long roll of poets. Chaucer, Spenser, Herrick, Cowley, Pope, first drew breath in it; and Milton was born in Bread Street, Cheapside, well within sound of Bow Bells. Never did poet, we think, change his residence so often as did the author of "Paradise Lost;" and wherever he went his house had a garden, a peep of sky, a strip of close-shaven lawn, where he might—

"Rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth show,
And every herb that sips the dew."

Milton was a Puritan, touched with a Greek delight in the joy and loveliness of life. His father, a "scrivener," by profession, and a "man of ingeniose tastes," was a skilled proficient on the lute and the organ; a composer of madrigals, and, in his day, a famed writer of sacred songs. His son inherited the father's love of music. In his school and college days at St. Paul's, and Christchurch at Cambridge, we can picture Milton, in his leisure moments, playing on the viol, or practising on the organ of the college chapel. It was, probably, his love of trees, which gave rise to the tradition, that mulberry trees had been planted by his hand in Cambridge. There is a hoary patriarch still standing in the Christchurch College garden which is associated with his name. On leaving college, 1632, when he was four-and-twenty, the young man gave up all thoughts of taking orders, and returned to his father's property at Horton, in Buckinghamshire. Wooded solitudes, and meadows, crowned in the distance by Windsor Castle "bosom'd high in tufted trees," were the haunts wherein he "nourished a youth sublime." Every step of that




Beautiful country, whence London is so easy of access, is classic ground. Its woods, its meadows and heaths are twice hallowed by memories of Milton; for the scenes that saw him in the vigour and beauty of his manhood, beheld him, in after years, old, destitute, and blind. These dells and forest aisles that inspired "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," "Comus," "Lycidas," saw him brood over the last touches of "Paradise Lost," and dream out "Paradise Regained." Seldom has poet had so privileged a youth as Milton's; seldom so forlorn an old age.

A visit to Italy, which lasted some fifteen months, closed the first blissful period. The traveller hastened his return to serve with his pen Cromwell's Parliamentary party, then rising to power. The second period of his life began with a deplorable blunder. A dismal



chapter in life's "Comedy of Errors" might be furnished by a record of the mistakes made by men of genius in the choice of their wives. The story of Milton's first matrimonial venture would rank among the foremost of such blunders. The poet had removed to a house in Aldersgate, large enough to accommodate pupils. One day Milton went to Shotover, in Oxfordshire, apparently for a holiday; he returned at the end of a month with a wife of seventeen. Mary Powell, the girl he had chosen for his life's companion, was the daughter of a jovial Royalist, who kept open house. Her life had been spent amidst gay and reckless surroundings. She cared nothing for intellectual pursuits. Before the honeymoon was over the bride's soul quailed at the dulness, the solitariness, the frugality of her lot.

She asked, and obtained permission, to visit her family. She then refused to return to her Puritan husband, and her family, under pretence of disapproval of the poet's political views, sanctioned her disobedience. Wounded to the quick by the ignominy heaped upon him, passionately resenting the thraldom of a marriage that was no marriage, Milton wrote his treatises on the justification of divorce. Two years later, when the King's cause was lost, and Milton was one of the foremost figures of the rising party, his father-in-law was ruined, and the wife then sought reconciliation with her husband. Concealed in a friend's house at which Milton visited, she flung herself at his feet; he forgave her, took her home, and magnanimously provided for her impoverished parents. The house in the Barbican to which he then removed has disappeared. There he published his first volume, containing "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," "Comus," "Lycidas." Mary Milton died seven years later in giving birth to her fourth child.

The house, 19, York Street, Westminster, comparatively lately taken down, occupied the site of the abode where many important domestic events occurred in the life of the poet. There, he became totally blind; there, he wrote some of his most important prose works. There, he took

his second wife, Catherine Woodcock, commemorated in one of his sonnets as "his late espoused saint" in whose person "love, sweetness, and goodness shined." All traces of this home has disappeared—the cotton willow-tree the poet planted, the grounds in which he walked, have vanished; workshops and other buildings cover the place.

Milton's third marriage seems to have been a prosaic and comfortable union. If according to his tenets—

> "Nothing lovelier can be found
> In woman than to study household good."

Elizabeth Minshull, his third wife, must have proved a thoroughly satisfactory partner. "God have mercy, Betty," he is reported to have said to her, one day, when she had prepared some dainty for his dinner, "I see thou wilt perform according to thy promise, in providing me such dishes as I think fit while I live, and when I die thou knowest I have left thee all."

In his old age, in his ruin and blindness, the poet appeals to our tenderest veneration. We seem to see him as his friend, the Quaker Elmwood saw him at Chalfont, as Dryden describes him, sitting at the organ under those rusty green hangings. We see his pale serene face which life's tragedy has marked with lines of noble beauty. His clear grey eyes seek the light that for him was quenched ere half his days were counted.

> "——though blind of sight,
> Despised, and thought-extinguished, quite,
> With inward eyes illuminated,
> His fiery virtue roused
> From under ashes into sudden flames."

Milton died of an attack of gout, on Sunday, November 8th, 1674, and was buried in the chancel of St. Giles, Cripplegate, near his father. His name marks the spot; but there is much reason to fear that the report of the profanation of the leaden coffin, in 1790, and of the dispersion of his bones by the parochial authorities, is true.

# SHELLEY.

SHELLEY'S personality is one of the most puzzling in literature. Of no one is it so easy to narrate episodes far from flattering to good sense and right judgment, and yet, of no other poet are there more charming stories to prove how winsome, and loveable, and noble-minded he was. Matthew Arnold was wont to declare that, while every poet "had a bee in his bonnet, Shelley had a whole hive." Of a truth, this strange complex being either repels or irresistibly fascinates, both as a man and as a poet. An eminent French critic has declared that it is impossible to say whether Shelley was more a saintly sinner or a sinful saint. The remark is apt, for the poet is much more the "fallen angel," than the "born sinner."

His childhood, with its early sorrow; his agony of boyhood; his turbulent, enthusiastic youth at Oxford, in Ireland, and in London; his premature and ill-fated marriage; and his abrupt departure for abroad, with his beloved Mary, daughter of his "friend and master," Godwin; these and other episodes make the story of his life in England, one of singular pathos, as well as of puzzling contradictions. It is to Italy, that we look for happy associations of Shelley—always excepting the brief period when he haunted the Thames-reaches about Waldergrave and Marlow, and wrote "Alastor," that wonderful unconscious poetic biography.

The poet's writing and reading-rooms were ever the glens, the mountain-sides, the woods and shores. "Prometheus Unbound" was composed among the solitary wastes of the then weed-grown ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, overlooking Rome. "Adonais," that incomparable dirge for Keats, was first sung near the banks of the Serchio. The exquisite

"Cloud" was inspired by the brooding sweetness of the Pisan sky. At Leghorn, one evening, as he wandered among the myrtle groves, through which darted the fire-flies, a lark poured from the sun-set sky the music that found words in the lyric we all know and love.

At Naples a melancholy oppressed Shelley. Our illustration shows the scenes upon which he looked—the Bay, the blue and everchanging waters of which reflected Vesuvius, "A smoke by day and a flame by night." There, also, the "Stanzas Written in Dejection," that most wonderful poem of despondency ever penned, was inspired by a romantic incident in the poet's life.

How beautiful is this verse—

"Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne, and yet must bear,
Till death, like sleep, might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air,
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony."

"Epipsychidion," that perfect lyrical poem which the poet described to a friend as an "idealised history of my life and feelings," owed its creation to Shelley's ideal love for Emilia Viviani. The young contessina, a girl of great beauty, and of varied mental accomplishments, was shut up, together with her sister, in a convent by their jealous stepmother. The chivalrous, emotional poet heard of it, and he and his wife, after considerable trouble, succeeded in gaining access to the immured one, and solaced her with frequent visits, books, and flowers. Shelley, for a time, fell deeply in love with her, worshipping in her his Ideal of Beauty. Later, he was disillusioned, but fortunately not until he had written this masterpiece.



Boating was ever Shelley's favourite recreation. He was on the water by night and day, in moonlight and sunshine, whether on the lagoons of Venice, on the lake of Como, on the wild and beautiful Gulf of Spezzia; as, in his younger days he had been on the Thames, at Marlow. A short time before the journey from which he was never to return, he rowed out to sea, in a light skiff, with the wife of the friend who was so soon to perish with him. He took her out far from the shore and pausing, rested absorbed in his thoughts, and watched the varying spectacle of sky and sea. She spoke to him, he did not answer; he had forgotten the presence of his terrified companion. The flat-bottomed boat was one which would upset with the slightest jerk. "I will never again put my foot in that horrid coffin—he is seeking after what we all avoid—death," cried his companion, as at length she jumped on shore, little guessing how prophetic were her words.

At Casa Magni, shortly before the fatal journey, two strange, portent-like incidents occurred to Shelley. He saw a vision of Allegra, Byron's daughter, rise from the sea, joyously clap her hands and beckon to him. On another occasion he saw a cloaked figure approach his bedside and sign to him to follow, and when it reached the sitting-room the figure unveiled its face, in which Shelley, horrified, recognised his own features.

On the 1st July, 1822, Shelley and Captain Williams went to Leghorn in their little yacht, the *Ariel*, and there met the Leigh Hunts, who had then arrived from England. On the 8th they set sail to return home. A storm was gathering. Their progress was watched by Captain Roberts from the top of the Leghorn lighthouse, till in the hurricane a whirlwind enveloped the frail boat and hid it from sight. Twenty minutes later, when the darkness of the tempest had cleared away, no sign of the yacht was to be seen. Days of miserable expectancy passed, and at length, news came to the anxious watchers at San Terenzo that the two bodies had been washed ashore. The faithful friend, Trelawney, recognised Shelley by the two volumes in his pocket: one of Keat's poems, with the page

turned down at "The Eve of St. Agnes," the other a Greek tragedy. The bodies were cremated on the shore near Viareggio; wine, myrrh and frankincense were cast into the flames. "More wine was poured over Shelley's dead body, than he drank during the course of his life," says Trelawney, grimly. The poet's ashes were laid in the cemetery adjoining the burial-ground where his little son and Keats lay buried. "I think it is the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld," Shelley had once written to a friend. In "Adonais," he had sung—

"The soft sky smiles—the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! Oh! hasten thither!
No more let life divide what death can join together."

The flat stone, encircled with acanthus and violets, which marks the place where the ashes rest, lies under the shadow of one of the weed-grown towers of the ancient Roman wall, and near to the Pyramid of Caius Cestius. The Poet's name, the dates of his birth and death, 4th August, 1792, and 8th July, 1822, and the words *Cor Cordium*, are graven on the stone, with a snatch of "Ariel's" song beneath—

"Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange."



# POPE.

"THERE are some advantages accruing from a genius to poetry, and they are all I can think of: the agreeable power of self-amusement when a man is idle or alone; the privilege of being admitted into the best company; the freedom of saying as many careless things as other people, without being so severely remarked upon." Alexander Pope found yet another advantage which he does not enumerate, the acquisition of fame, which was the ruling passion of his life.

His education was of the most desultory description. His school-days were of short duration on account of his physical delicacy, but he was an insatiable reader, and especially of the English, French, Italian, Latin and Greek poets. "I followed," he says, "everywhere my fancy led me, and was like a boy gathering flowers in the woods and fields just as they fell in his way." He began to write poetry very early:

> "As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
> I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came."

The genius of the little Englishman revealed itself in the Ode to Windsor, part of which was composed when he was sixteen, and in which Diana is described as having

> "Cynthus' top forsook for Windsor shade,"

and where every glade and alley of the English wood is over-run with Greek Nymphs and Gods.

A nostalgia for the intellectual life of the metropolis, drew Pope, in early manhood, to London. When he was twelve, a friend had once taken him to Wills' coffee-house, and he had there seen Dryden, his master in

the metrical art, presiding over the assembled wits of the day, all drinking punch and smoking big clay pipes. Now, Dryden was dead, and the glory of Wills' coffee-room had set. Addison reigned over a senate of wits at Buttons' coffee-house, at a stone's throw from Covent Garden. Pope was




early admitted into the circle; but ere long we find the sensitive, irritable little man engaged in quarrels with the master and disciples. When his translation of the "Illiad" first appeared, the diminutive deformed poet was courted by the leading members of the fashionable world, by publishers and critics, and the self-taught cripple became the dread of his enemies, and the leading literary man of his day.

Life in London proved too exciting an ordeal for the poet's "tender, crazy little carcase." In 1715, he therefore bade the "dear, droll, distracting town farewell," and settled in Twickenham.

He was comparatively rich; by his translation of Homer, alone, he made £9,000. The embellishing of his cottage and grounds, sufficed to fill his days, together with the writing of poetry, which was "my only profession, and idleness my only pleasure."

Pope's quaint little drawings of ground plans, of porticoes, of columns, arches, etc., may be seen in the British Museum; they are scribbled, for the most part, on backs of letters. His cottage and everything about it delighted him; the Thames washed the edge of the lawn—

> "No seas so rich, so gay no banks appear,
> No lake so gentle and no springs so clear."

His garden measured about five acres, and was enclosed by three lanes. Pope, Horace Walpole tells us "twisted, twirled, rhymed and harmonised this bit of ground till it appeared two or three sweet little lawns opening on one another, and the whole surrounded by impenetrable woods." The "impenetrable woods" were a plantation at the back of the house on the other side of the road, which cut the poet's property in two. To unite "his wilderness" to his lawns the poet built his underground grotto. The building of this famous "shadowy cave" was his hobby. His friends indulged him in it, and sent for its adornment pieces of spar, coral, crystals, humming-birds' nests. Pope has commemorated this grotto in verse and prose. It is "a temple wholly composed of shells in the rustic manner." The shells are interspersed with "looking-glasses in regular form," and one of these in the shape of a star, adorns the ceiling. When the alabaster lamp is lit the cave glistens as "with lingering drops."

> "There my retreat the best companions grace,
> Chiefs out of war and statesmen out of place."

Then came Bolingbroke, proud of his thirty years' friendship with the poet; also Lord Peterborough, the amazing soldier who boasted he had seen more kings and postillions than any man in Europe. Bathurst who had a craze for landscape gardening, and came down to discuss his hobby with Pope, and fat, genial Gay wrote a special poem to celebrate the completion of the grotto. Swift, too, made a short stay at the cottage, and departed, vowing that the house was too small to accommodate two valetudinarians. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whom Pope began by flattering outrageously and ended by loathing, was numbered among his guests. A host of wits, poets, statesmen, fair ladies, a crowd of candidates for fame, all eager for Pope's approval, wended their way to the cottage, of which not a stone now remains. Only the grotto survives. In its cool shade we may pause a moment and picture the friends who there sat watching on a Summer day "the sails on the river passing suddenly and vanishing as through a perspective glass." In the shadowy crowd we discern two women's figures, Maria Blunt, the woman he loved best after his mother, and that simple, homely mother, whose letters the poet treasures, whose dead face appears to him like that of a saint. It is pleasant to think of Pope at Twickenham, driving up to London, from time to time, in his coach, a "Homer in a nutshell," as Atterby called him; or rowed down the river by the waterman whose constant service rendered him a member of the establishment. "Paper sparing Pope," as Swift ironically dubbed him, because of his habit of scribbling down every fleeting thought on scraps of paper, sums up his whole life in the line he wrote of himself "The life of a wit is a warfare upon earth."

Pope died in his cottage at Twickenham, May, 1744, and lies buried in Twickenham Church, by the side of his parents.

# COWPER.

OLNEY, in North Bucks, with its adjacent flats, is not noted for picturesque beauty; but it was here that an eminent English poet found such peace as he was destined to enjoy. It was but the peace of an Orestes pursued by the Furies, an interval of calm between the dire torments of a mental disorder, but perhaps all the more precious and all the more beautiful on that account. For it was at Olney that Cowper first came regularly under the care of the Unwins, and while that care lasted he always had a solace, and a refuge against the clouds of mental darkness which threatened to overwhelm him. Without someone to guide and care for him this, in a very literal sense, "child" of genius could not have steered his way through the rough world. He was constitutionally insane. It is absurd to attribute his malady to a mere disappointment in love. It was an inherited tendency, and it required but the slightest shock to his exquisitely refined susceptibilities for its rapid development. Sensibility, which is a grace in others, was in him a disease. As a young man, he became insane with terror at the prospect of receiving a good appointment on the Parliamentary establishment of the House of Lords. The dread of a short oral examination by members of the House unsettled his mind. He tried to hang himself at his chambers in the Temple, where he was at that time studying for the bar. That desperate attempt conclusively proved to his friends his inability to pursue any public vocation. He was well-connected, the son of a clergyman, the great nephew of an earl, and at the time of his birth in 1731, interest was the great passport to success in all the professions, and in this particular he would have encountered no difficulties. It came to be understood in his family that he was to be watched over; but a visit to Huntingdon led to his acquaintance with the Unwins, and his final adoption into their

household. The mode of life in the Unwin household was eminently suited to his spirit, deeply tinged as this was with religious melancholy. "We breakfast commonly between eight and nine," he writes in 1766: "till eleven, we read, either the Scripture, or the sermons of some faithful teacher of these holy mysteries; at eleven, we attend Divine service, which is performed here once a day, and from twelve to three we separate and amuse ourselves as we please." The nature of the social relaxations may be inferred from his well-known lines:

> "Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
> Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
> And, while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
> Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
> That cheer, but not inebriate, wait on each,
> So let us welcome peaceful evening in."

What a picture of quiet contentment! Yet beneath the peace and quiet of his outward life lies the haunting terror ever present with him, that he is doomed to eternal damnation.


Cowper in his Garden

After the death of Mr. Unwin by a fall from his horse, the widow removed to Olney, and as the unhappy man of genius could not possibly exist without her, Cowper accompanied her. Southey describes Olney as the most northerly town in Buckinghamshire, consisting of one long street, with the houses built of stone, but thatched; and with a great church remarkable for its lofty spire. At Olney, the course of the Ouse becomes so winding that the distance thence to St. Neots, which is

about twenty miles by land, is about seventy by the stream. Here Cowper met the fatalistic Mr. Newton, a clergyman of the most pronounced Calvinistic views, who, in spite of his genuine friendly feeling to the poet, rendered his depression the gloomier by suggesting that he was possibly shut out from all hope of the Divine mercy. Cowper acquired a certain resignation of despair by constantly dwelling on the thought, but at times it quite unsettled his reason. While Mrs. Unwin was with him, however, her exquisitely tender ministrations partially banished the haunting spectres from his mind. She taught him to find the purest and the most soothing delights in his garden, his summer-house, and in his tame hares—Puss, Tiney, and Bess—whose characters, as well as habits, he has himself so felicitously described. "Puss," he says, "would leap into my lap, raise himself up upon his hinder-feet, and bite the hair from my temples. He would suffer me to take him up, and to carry him about in my arms, and has more than once fallen fast asleep upon my knee." His literary work was, at first, merely the private diversion of an afflicted mind, in its lucid intervals; and though he had written much, he published little before his fiftieth year. He was encouraged to publish, as he had been encouraged to write, by his faithful mentor Mrs. Unwin, and he suddenly realised that he had become the most famous poet of his time. The recluse in his garden was soon the chief literary figure in England; his summer-house was the British temple of the Muse. "He calls it his boudoir," says Lady Hesketh, in one of her lively letters to her sister Theodora, Cowper's boyhood's love. "It has a door and a window, just holds a small table with a desk and two chairs, but though there are two chairs, and two persons might be contained therein, it would be with a degree of difficulty. For this cause, as I make a point of not disturbing a poet in his retreat, I go not there." "The Task" is a notable poem, though it is too didactic for the taste of the present day. Like all his works, it was directly inspired by feminine counsel, but in this instance not that of Mrs. Unwin. It was Lady Austen who




suggested to him his theme. He is eminently the poet of the home, and of all its associations. he was not writing poems full of moral maxims and good advice, or some of the most beautiful hymns in our language, he was turning an ode on "An Inkstand Dried in the Sun," on "The Death of Mrs. Throckmorton's Bullfinch," or on "The Feather Hangings of Mrs. Montagu." It is impossible to think of him without recalling to mind the gentle lady—whose death he survived but two or three years—his garden, his summer-house, and Olney Church. The hills of Surrey, as the nearest approach to mountains he had ever seen, frightened him. He longed for the plain with its placid beauties, for the gentle, but tortuous river, which was, in some sense, the image of his uneventful, yet troubled life. He wrote of himself:—




"I was the stricken deer, that left the herd,
Long since."

"Here much I ruminate, as much I may,
With other views of men and manners now
Than once, and others of a life to come."

# GRAY.

THE thought of Gray is closely associated with that of Burnham Beeches, which the gentle poet may be said to have discovered. During a college vacation, Gray visited an uncle at Burnham, in the neighbourhood of Stoke-Pogis. The old gentleman had been a famous hunter in his day, but, owing to the gout, was at this time, reduced to a state of grumbling inactivity. He held his delicate, dreamy nephew in contempt for preferring walking to riding, and reading to hunting. The ex-sportsman's dogs sat on all the chairs in the house, and completely ousted the poet. In self-defence, one day, Gray wandered off in search of some quiet spot, where he could absorb himself in a favourite book unmolested. He came upon a beautiful glade, "a vale and hill covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most ancient people, are always dreaming out their old stories to the wind." There he read Virgil by the hour; and the hares and squirrels played about him in his retreat as they played about Adam in Paradise. Thus he writes to Horace Walpole, his brilliant college chum, who had taken an immense fancy to Gray from the moment they met when small boys at Eton. An avenue of lime trees in the college grounds called the "Poets' Walk," is dedicated to Gray, and his friend who, it is said, often paced up and down it together. Walpole has told us that they were not athletes, that they "never made an expedition against bargemen, or won a match at cricket;" nevertheless, in the famous "Ode to Eton," the poet paints a robust and healthy boyhood:

"Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen
Full many a sprightly race,
Disporting on thy margent green,
The paths of pleasure trace;

Who foremost now, delight to cleave
With pliant arm, thy glassy wave?
The captive linnet which enthral?
What idle progeny succeed
To chase the rolling circle's speed
Or urge the flying ball?"

When his student days were over, he and Horace Walpole made an interesting tour in France and Italy. Unfortunately the friends quarrelled, and Gray returned to England alone. It is said that since Milton, no such accomplished English traveller had visited those classic shores. Gray reached London in time to see his father die: the elder Gray had been a squanderer, a bad husband, a careless father. Mrs. Gray had procured the money for her son's education, by carrying on a business, in partnership, with her sister. After the death of his father, Gray, who was devotedly attached to his mother, took her down to the sylvan village of Stoke-Pogis, in Bucks, and there established her and her two sisters in a comfortable home. West End House—where the three ladies lived to the end of their days, and to which the poet paid constant visits—was situated at the end of the lane leading to Stoke Common. It was a simple farmstead, two stories high, with a porch over the front door opening out into a garden stocked with flowers. There we picture our poet




"Brushing with hasty steps
the dew away
To meet the sun upon the
upland lawn,"

or loitering in the rising field behind the house—crowned by a height on which a summer-house still stands—and observing the habits of the birds and flowers; noting down as was his wont, such delicately thrilling announcements as the arrival of the first white butterfly, the first song of the lark, and the first blossom on the almond-tree. There he wrote "The Ode to Eton College," and there, seven years after its commencement, he finished the immortal "Elegy in a Country Churchyard." The ivy-covered church, with the tombstones gathered round it, the simple, peaceful scenes in the gathering twilight, inspired that exquisite poem, one of the most perfect in our language, whose popularity no changes of taste or fashion have diminished. General Wolff, as he rowed up to Quebec on the eve of his death is said to have repeated those sweet and solemn words. Gray lived the life of a recluse and student in College Chambers, of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, but every vacation he came down to the quiet house, in the peaceful tree-embowered country town. We can picture the gentle poet, made much of by the three old ladies who loved and were proud of him; and with good reason, for Gray was considered in his own day to be "Perhaps the most learned man in Europe." The great people of Stoke Manor House also courted the poet. These ladies had discovered that at West End House there "lurked a wicked imp they call a poet," and vowed they must make his acquaintance. One day they arrived, and finding him out, left a mysterious message, requesting his presence at Stoke House. Gray and his hostesses soon became warm friends. There are traces of a long flirtation between the middle-aged poet and the heiress; in his note-book appears delightful jottings concerning the stately gardens at Stoke, with its old-fashioned flowers, and south wall covered with clusters of fruit.

After Mrs. Gray's death, and that of the two old aunts, West End House was shut up and Gray betook himself to London. The British Museum was thrown open for the first time to the public on the 15th of January, 1759, and Gray was among the visitors that day. He had

settled down in Southampton Row, to be near the shrine of learning. In one of his delightful letters we have a picture of the Bloomsbury of those days. "Here is air, sunshine, and quiet to comfort you," he writes.

On the death of Cibber, Gray was offered the laureateship, but declined it. In 1768, "the gentleman who sometimes writes for his amusement,"




was elected Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, where he lived the life of a recluse, in quaintly decorated chambers in Pembroke Hall, until his death on the 22nd July, 1772. He was buried at Stoke Pogis by the side of his mother, and in the adjacent Park, a monument has been erected to his memory.

## BURNS.

ROBERT BURNS is the lyric poet of joy, of love, of nature. Born in days of decorous ideals, ever chasing the fleeting phantoms of delight, and dying in the ardour of his vain quest, Burns reminds us of those mythical Greek figures, half-animal, half-god, those fabled Centaurs and Fauns, with their exuberant delight in physical life, their gift of music and wise speech. It is easy to understand Burns' impatience of restraint, his imperious demand for enjoyment at any price, his sympathy with the drunken Tam O'Shanter's triumphant mood of mind,

> "Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
> O'er the ills of life victorious—"

when we think of the hardships and privations of his youth, which he describes as "this kind of life, the cheerless gloom of a hermit, the unceasing gloom of a galley slave.

He was a perfect Don Juan in his susceptibility to the charms of the "Lassies O!" the rustic Jeans, Nannies, and Marys.

He had a manly sympathy with the weak, tenderness for all dumb creatures. Saint Francis could not have worded a gentler address to the frightened mouse—

> "Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,
> O, what a panic's in thy breastie.
> I'm truly sorry man's dominion
> Has broken nature's social union,
> An' justifies that ill opinion,
> Which makes thee startle
> At me, thy poor earth-born companion,
> An' fellow mortal—"




which he had crushed with his plough, or uttered more pitying words to the wounded hare; or spoken more touchingly to the

"Wee, modest crimson-tipped flower."

His love of country, his ambitious independent spirit, his pride in the exploits of Wallace, make him the representative of Scottish genius. It was his desire

"That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some useful plan or book could make,
Or sing a song at least."

He has touched with sweetness and glory the hills, the rivers, the braes of his dear native region, Ayrshire. Born on the banks of his "Bonnie Doon," in an "auld clay biggin," built by his father, the poet was familiar since early childhood with "Alloway Kirk," the haunted burying ground which was the scene of "Tam's" adventure. Distressing poverty surrounded his early years; a poverty that was ennobled by the father's heroic struggle against adversity, his paternal solicitude for his children's education, his patriarchal piety, all of which the son commemorated in "The Cotter's Saturday night."

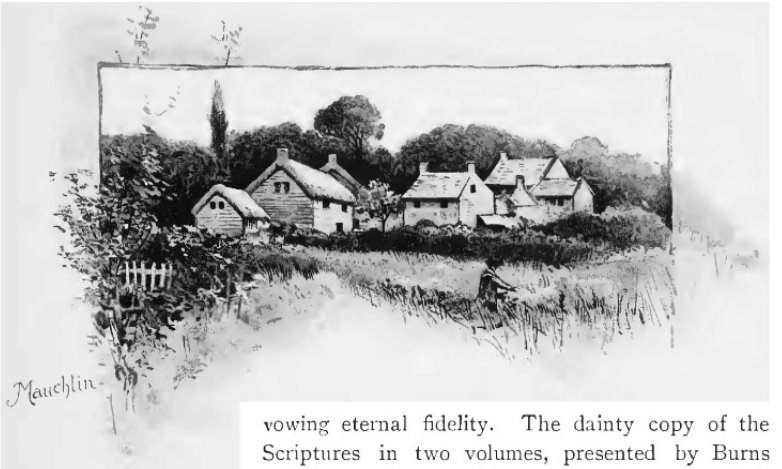
Burns was fifteen when "a bonnie, sweet sonsie lass," a year younger than himself, his partner in the labours of the harvest field inspired him to write. His first song was adapted to the melody of her favourite reel. From that time the lad was always in love, or the confidant of other love-smitten swains. The lassies, Wallace, and Nature, inspired his songs.

When Burns settled near Mauchline he was head of the family. His ambition to distinguish himself was not confined to literature, he was proud of his personal appearance and his conversational powers. He was the only man in the parish who wore his hair tied up; his gaudy red and white check plaid was draped in a peculiar way.

With his fine dark eyes, the finest Sir Walter Scott had ever seen in any man's head, his gift of winning words in speech and song, Burns was a brilliant personality. One evening, when, with his little dog following at his heels as he danced, he assisted at a penny ball given by the young men and women of Mauchline, he expressed a loud wish "that he could get any of the lasses to like him as well as his dog." A few days later the dog, the four-footed "Deus ex machinæ" in this unhappy affair, ran over some linen a young girl was bleaching on Mauchline Green. The girl was Jean Armour, who laughingly inquired of the poet if he had found a lassie to love him as well as did his dog. Burns was not long in replying:—

"Though mountains rise, and deserts howl,
And oceans roar between;
Yet, dearer than my deathless soul,
I still would love my Jean."

Shortly after, when Mauchline village was ablaze with indignation, when the Kirk authorities invited the dark-eyed Don Juan to come and sit on the stool of repentance; when the door of Jean's home was shut upon him, we find our poet standing upon one of the banks of Ayr, with Highland Mary on the other, holding a Bible between them, and




vowing eternal fidelity. The dainty copy of the Scriptures in two volumes, presented by Burns to his new love on this occasion, is preserved in the Burns' Monument at Alloway, near Ayr. On the fly-leaf are inscribed texts, as to the binding nature of an oath. The betrothed couple parted, and Mary went to visit her family in the Highlands before joining Burns as his wife. She never returned; death took her from the poet, who years afterwards wrote the well-known poem, "To Mary in Heaven."



"That sacred hour can I forget,
Can I forget the hallowed grove,
Where by the winding Ayr we met,
To live one day of parting love?"

In Edinburgh, where, shortly after, we find Burns, all society goes mad in its reception of the "ploughman-poet." The "Duchess of Gordon and all the gay world" made him welcome. When society grew weary of the lion of the season, Burns returned to Mauchline, married Jean Armour, his old love, and settled down on a farm—Ellisland—close to Dumfries. In the beautiful grounds of "Friar's Carse," "Tam O'Shanter" was written, in a single day. Burns composed it, as he walked up and down his favourite path at Nithside.

As a means of adding to his livelihood, Burns accepted the post of exciseman, offered to him by Government, and fulfilled its distasteful duties with energy, if not always with tact. Thereupon he gave up Ellisland, and settled in Dumfries, on his salary of £70 a year. There is no sadder story than that of the close of Burns' life. Out of the darkness float songs of ineffable sweetness, the strains of "Auld Lang Syne," of "Wandering Willie," and of "Highland Mary." In his 37th year, on July 21st, 1796, death came as a deliverer to him. He was buried with pomp and much mourning in Dumfries Kirk-yard.



# *WORDSWORTH.*

THE plainest of plain men, gifted with genius, a peasant with the insight of a God; thus Wordsworth appears to us. He did not idealize, in the ordinary sense of the word: he saw too straight for that, but he saw the folk around him, as their Maker might see them. He saw through their common exterior to the soul within them, and the poor, the prosaic, the disgraced, became heroic and pathetic. Lucy Gray, Peter Bell, Widow Blake, might seem to most of us unworthy of notice, to Wordsworth, they are as notable as the gifted and high-born. He has been called, or rather miscalled, the chief of the Lake Poets. Had he been placed in the Tropics, he would have described the pine forests with the same exquisiteness of detail and grandeur of general effect as he has written of his native country; he would have interpreted the dwellers there, with the same spiritual recognition of the dignity or ignominy of their lot. It was this sense of the sacredness of all human beings, that made him espouse so passionately the cause of the French Revolution. When the plain man in Wordsworth is in the ascendant, he becomes tedious, for his strength and his weakness lie in this union of supreme insight with the bald simplicity of a peasant.

It is a common error to regard Wordsworth as a prosaic rhymer, who occasionally rises to the heights of great poetry, and indeed one is led to this conclusion by whole desert tracts of his verse varied but by the slightest oasis of beauty. And one feels annoyed that he should have written so much that is worthless, but when one finds from his own confession, that his baldness of language, his dullness of description are intentional, the whole of his work assumes a different aspect.

Wordsworth was consciously, and of set purpose, leading a revolution against the ornate artificial-flowery style of the eighteenth century poets—a revolution in which Burns unconsciously bore his part, and of which our Tennyson is the eldest born son—and in this effort Wordsworth fought against his own soul's impulses—as much pains was taken to avoid poetic diction as other men take to produce it—and thus he sacrificed his poetry to his idea, and produced a thousand bald lines for one gem, such as the poems to Lucy, but *he did what he meant to do*, and how many of us can say as much?

The tawdry sentiment of the powder-puff and patch-box poets of the eighteenth century is a thing of the past, and it is to Wordsworth and Burns that we owe its extinction. It is in his poems to Lucy and his sonnets that Wordsworth is at his greatest, that he rises above criticism, "into the Heaven where the immortals sit."

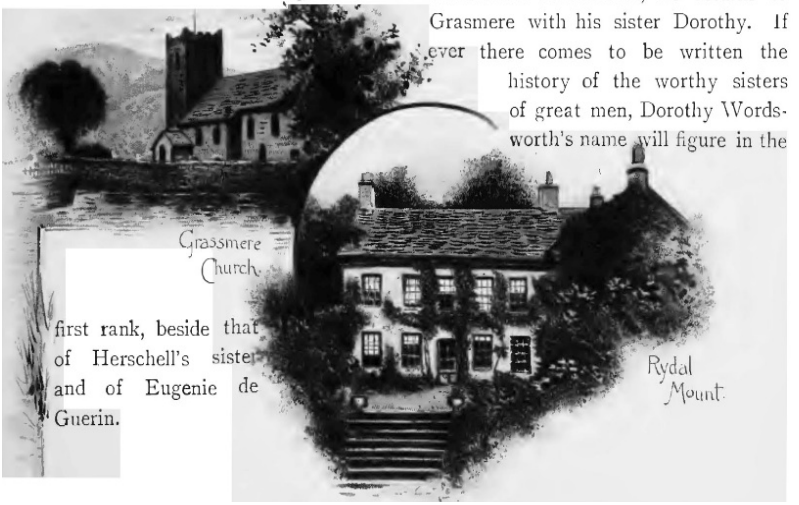
Youth rarely loves Wordsworth—he has none of the glow and glitter that catch "sweet and twenty"—Twenty often prefers the ball-room to a hill-side—and Byron to Wordsworth—but as we grow older, we love more and more, the elm-trees and meadows, the moorlands and the fens, the sunset lights, the dews of dawn awake new and more intense delight, and Wordsworth's poetry grows to be "as a beloved hand laid cool upon our forehead when it burns of some wild fever."

Every part of the Lake country is sanctified by his genius. He has breathed a soul into its hills, its dales, its tarns. About Grasmere and Rydal, however, cluster the most intimate associations with his life. Born at Cockermouth, on the outskirts of that beautiful region, the poet's childish recollections were of Derwent Water and of Skiddaw, which caught the sunset glory as it reared its head against the eastern sky. He went to school at Hawkshead, "the beloved vale," near Esthwaite Water, and there with the spirits of a healthy ten-year-old boy joined in the sports of his comrades. But even at this early age he held "unconscious intercourse with beauty, old as creation." To the age of fourteen Wordsworth dates

his "consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poet of any age or country, so far as I was acquainted with them. I made a resolution to supply in some degree this deficiency."




In the "Prelude," we follow the history of the outward and spiritual events of his life, until the time when, disappointed with the results of the French Revolution, he returns to Grasmere with his sister Dorothy. If ever there comes to be written the history of the worthy sisters of great men, Dorothy Wordsworth's name will figure in the first rank, beside that of Herschell's sister and of Eugenie de Guerin.



To Wordsworth

"Her voice was like a hidden bird that sang,
The thought of her was like a flash of light,
Or an unseen companionship, a breath
Of fragrance independent of the wind."

The house where the brother and sister spent frugal days, was covered with roses and honeysuckles. It had a bit of orchard and a garden. They boated together, took long excursions together, read together. Both had a passionate love of nature. Dorothy kept a diary, and in it she noted down simple stories of country folk; some of the delicate effects of nature that she saw and recorded furnished themes for her brother's poems. On an expedition to Ullswater, as they approach the lake, she describes how they came upon daffodils close to the water's edge. "I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about them; some rested their heads on the stones as on a pillow; the rest tossed, and reeled, and danced, and seemed as if they verily danced with the wind, they looked so gay and glancing." These were the daffodils of which the poet sang,

"I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high, o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

After her brother's marriage Dorothy continued to be an inmate of his house. The road from Grasmere to Keswick, where Southey and Coleridge lived, and that over Kirkstone to Ullswater, are peopled with memories of the Wordsworths of Thirlmere. The fair lake which the Corporation of Manchester has turned into a reservoir was the trysting place of the poets, and the rock, on which the friends and Dorothy Wordsworth carved their initials, is now doubtless submerged.

When Wordsworth was appointed to the Distributorship of stamps for Westmoreland and Cumberland, the family removed to Rydal Mount. The white house stands in "a sea of foliage" some yards from the road.




A flight of steps leads to the entrance. In Wordsworth's time, the rooms on the ground floor, the dining-room, breakfast-room, and library were simply furnished. The library contained a good collection of standard books, busts of Scott and Wordsworth, and some fine engravings. In the garden was centred the poetry and distinction of the poet's home. There was the larch tree from which for years sang a faithful thrush, and among the branches of the laburnum tree hung the osier cages of the doves. We can picture the sweet old-fashioned flowers, the grasses and wild plants that grew in the interstices of the stone steps; the terraced walks rising behind the house under the shadow of Nab's Scar's, and from which the eye travelled over a tossing sea of verdure to the gleaming waters of Rydal Lake, with its fairy islands. As with most poets, Wordsworth's study was in the open air. "Here," said a servant to a visitor who asked to see her master's study, "is his library, but his study is out of doors." The country folk watched with affectionate interest the gaunt figure of the poet wrapped in a plaid, and wearing a pair of green glasses to protect his delicate eyes, and a large hat, as he went murmuring aloud—"booing about" as they called it, and—

"Scattered to the winds
The vocal raptures of fresh poetry."

The road between Rydal and Grasmere speaks to us of the poet. Here one evening, as the glow-worms were all alight in dusky nooks, he thought of "The Pilgrim's Dream;" there he saw that monument of ice on a Winter day, "like marble, white, like ether pure." It was at Rydal Mount

that he wrote of that sunset where the mountains and the glowing mists formed a kind of Jacob's ladder. The rocks, the flowers, are all glorified by the touch of his passionate sympathy; nature is still but the background upon which are drawn the pathetic and heroic figures of the dalesmen and women, whose simple souls he understood, reverenced, and interpreted.

Wordsworth, "sole king of rocky Cumberland," died at Rydal Mount in April, 1850, as the cuckoo-clock, the sound of which had often beguiled him to feel as in a world where nothing can go wrong, struck noon. He was buried at Grasmere, according to his wish, close to the church where he was married, and near the children and sister who had preceded him. He had won the desire of his youth, to be numbered among

"The poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays."



# BYRON.

NO one can study the life of Byron without feeling a burning indignation against his mother, who, undoubtedly, by her treatment of him, italicised the faults, and half obliterated the qualities of his nature. Unreasonable indulgence, equally unreasonable punishment, a constant change of tutors and of studies, and a ceaseless system of worry, had the worst possible influence on Byron's character. That a different up-bringing would have produced a different result is seen from the fact that at Dr. Glennie's school at Dulwich, away from his mother's influence, he showed a marked improvement in temper and industry.

To the student of human nature, the days of childhood, and of school life of a boy, are the epitome of the future man. This is notably the case with Lord Byron, "the wild northern colt" as his school fellows called him. The whole contradictory tendencies of his manhood's care were foreshadowed in his life at Harrow. The lad we meet there, is father to the man who died at Missolonghi, for the independence of Greece. He is the Byron in embryo, whose verse was to be the awakener of the English conscience against oppression. At Harrow, we find foreshadowed in him the poet of burning thoughts and words; one also who knew how to launch the epigram of heroic emotion. The note of rebellion, which was so characteristic of Byron's genius, rang through his school career. On the occasion of a school revolt when the rebels proposed to burn down the class-room, Byron, though usually the ringleader, opposed the scheme, and averted its execution by pointing to the names of their fathers carved on the walls and desks. We recognise in the passionate hatred of oppression that inspired him at school to

protect the weak against the strong, the precursor of the man, who saw the inner meaning of the French Revolution, and denounced the Holy Alliance in its endeavour to repress the impulse of nations to win their liberty. It is fascinating to see the aristocrat sighing for the freedom of the human race; and in those fagging scenes at Harrow when Byron appeared as the protector of the feeble to those he rescued, he appeared as of a nature superior to their own, as a god helping mortals, but always as a helper. The magnanimity with which, as a child, he held out his arm to receive half the lashes a bully, too big for him to fight, was inflicting upon another child, was prompted by the same spirit which sent him to suffer for Greece.

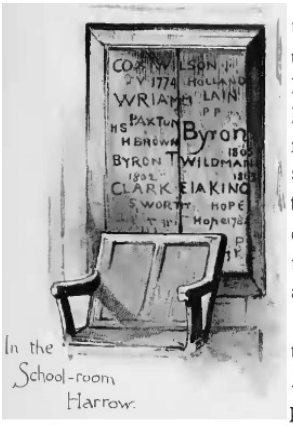
He retained the fondest recollections of Harrow:—

"Ye scenes of my childhood, whose loved recollection
Embitters the present, compared with the past;
Where science first dawned on the powers of reflection,
And friendships were formed, too romantic to last."

He overcame the disadvantages of his lameness. He was leader in "cricket's manly toil," in swimming, boxing, riding. He rebelled against routine in study; performed occasional prodigies of intellectual activity, and then relapsed into idleness. "He always," says a friend, "preferred hockey to Horace, relinquished even Helicon for duck-puddle, and gave up the best poet who ever wrote hard Latin for a game of cricket on the common." His passionate friendships are memorable, and he was loyal to them through life—

"If chance some well-remembered face,
Some old companion of my early race
Advance to claim his friend with honest joy,
My eyes, my heart, proclaimed me yet a boy:
The glittering scene, the fluttering groups around,
Were all forgotten, when my friend was found!"

When Byron was at Harrow, he fell in love with Miss Chaworth—



In the School-room Harrow.

the Mary of his poems. In after life, looking upon this one pure passion, he fancied that if Mary Chaworth had returned his love, it would have been his salvation. The melancholy and moodiness that grew upon him in his manhood, seem to have cast their shadow over him in those school days A gravestone in the churchyard on the hill is still called "Byron's Tomb." There the future poet would sit for hours in dreamy abstraction.

On leaving Cambridge, Byron, at nineteen, took up his residence, for a time, at Newstead Abbey, the home of his ancestors. But he was possessed by that eternal unrest, which is so often a part of the poets' nature. He travelled abroad for two years, and then returned to Newstead; he was profoundly lonely and wretched; his marriage proved unhappy. He plunged into politics as a distraction, until after the publication of "Childe Harold," when "I awoke one


Harrow on-th. Hill.

morning and found myself famous.' Then he realized "that, Society, as now constituted, is *fatal* to all great original undertakings," and he quitted his native country for ever. He lived in Italy, where he became acquainted with many of the eminent folk of his time, wrote his immortal works, and, finally, threw himself with ardour into the War of Independence in Greece. At his death, Stanhope wrote of him: "England has lost her brightest genius—Greece her noblest friend." The cities of Greece contended for the honour of giving him a grave. Athens wished him to be interred in the Temple of Theseus. His popularity in England had by this time waned, and his country refused him a place in Westminster Abbey; and he was buried in the quiet little village-church of Hucknall. His most enduring monument is the panel in the school-room at Harrow, on which his name is carved.



## LONGFELLOW.

"THE Forest City," as Portland in the State of Maine is called, was the native town of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. At the beginning of the century it well deserved the sylvan title it bore. Built under the shadow of a primeval forest, its houses, stores, and churches of timber, its streets shaded by patriarchal trees, the hills surrounding it clothed with verdure, it had an idyllic charm. Situated on the sea, there were added to the town's pastoral sweetness associations of war and of adventure. A naval combat was fought within sight of Portland, when Longfellow was a small child; and often there would come into the harbour some great ship, laden with merchandise from a distant land. Memories of his native city always exercised a fascination over the poet whose genius is idyllic and chivalric.

"Often I think of the beautiful town
That is seated by the sea;
Often in thought go up and down
The pleasant streets of that dear old town,
And my youth comes back to me.

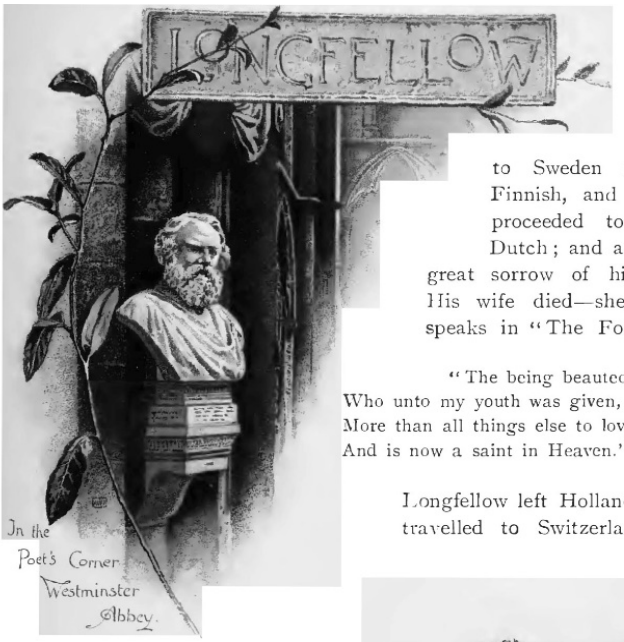
"I remember the black wharves and the slips,
And the sea-tides, tossing free;
And Spanish sailors, with bearded lips,
And the beauty and mystery of the ships,
And the magic of the sea."

The boy loved poetry, romance, and music. To the end of his life he remembered his mother playing the harpischord of an evening; and the mention of certain stories or poems seemed to bring back snatches of

the old melodies, to which, as a child, he had listened as she read. He loved his mother tenderly; and, as he trudged by her side to the Unitarian Chapel, he proudly carried her footstool in winter, her posy in summer. At fifteen the future poet had acquired all the learning the academy of Portland could bestow upon him, and was sent to Bowdoin College, the Alma Mater of the State of Maine. There he acquitted himself with honour, and gave evidence of a native gift of language by the brilliancy of his translations. The College authorities offered to keep open for him the post of Professor of Foreign Languages should he feel inclined to fit himself for the discharge of its duties. After he had taken his degree, Longfellow set sail for Europe, and travelled through France, Spain, Italy, and part of Germany; in each country he learned the language, studied its literature, and gathered a store of memories that became the inspiration of his poetry.

When he returned to Bowdoin, some two years later, he was an accomplished linguist. Appointed to the Chair of Foreign Languages he settled down close to the College, and at the age of twenty-two, he was the youngest and the most popular of professors. He rose at six, he went to bed at midnight, he taught French, Italian, Spanish, and lectured on their literatures; he wrote grammars, and compiled speakers. In 1832 he married the daughter of one of his father's neighbours at Portland, who had been the love of his boyhood. The fame of the young professor spread, and two years later the University of Harvard sought him out, and offered to him the Chair of Modern Languages left vacant by the resignation of Mr. Ticknor. The offer was accompanied by a leave of absence to enable him to travel in Europe for a year.

Longfellow had already appeared as a poet before the world; as a poet he was received in London, and welcomed in the best literary society. He met Carlyle, and took tea with the Sage of Chelsea and his wife, in their house in Cheyne Row. His object in coming to Europe had been to study the Scandinavian tongues and literatures. He went



In the Poet's Corner Westminster Abbey.

to Sweden and learnt Swedish, Finnish, and Danish. He next proceeded to Holland to master Dutch; and at Rotterdam the first great sorrow of his lifetime occurred. His wife died—she it is of whom he speaks in "The Footsteps of Angels."

"The being beauteous,
Who unto my youth was given,
More than all things else to love me—
And is now a saint in Heaven."

Longfellow left Holland broken-hearted and travelled to Switzerland. At Interlacken, he met his college friend, Mr. Appleton, who was taking a driving tour through Switzerland with his father and sister. They offered to the young widower the vacant seat in their carriage. He accepted it and sat opposite the lady, whose


Longfellow's Home




beauty, grace and angelic smile he has celebrated as attributes of Mary Ashburton, the heroine of "Hyperion." Hers "were the deep unutterable eyes, with down-falling eyelids full of dreams and slumber." The poet and the lady parted as friends; some years later Miss Appleton became his wife.

During this interval Longfellow's name had taken rank as that of the first living American poet. His was a brilliant personality; he became one of the lights of the intellectual circles in Boston; he was moreover the glass of fashion to the youth of the period. Singularly handsome, and an exquisite by nature, the poet-professor was the best dressed man of those parts. His waistcoats, his walking-sticks, the shade of his gloves were carefully copied, just as his lectures were attended by crowded audiences and his poems were read, by all America.

When Longfellow married Miss Appleton, the bride's father gave as a wedding gift to the young couple Craigie House and estate. The mansion had belonged to General Washington, and there is a fitness in the thought of Longfellow, the poet of the affections, and the singer of his country's romantic annals, inhabiting the home of the founder of American Independence. The poet's love of beauty was apparent in the adornment of the house. The poet's writing-table was placed in the room where Washington had worked among his charts and memorials of his campaigns. The golden brown of the curtains, repeated in the furniture, gave a subdued richness to the background. Faded portraits of the great soldier and his wife hung among pastel portraits of Longfellow's chosen friends—Emerson, Hawthorne, Charles Felton, Sumner. A bust in marble of the historian, G. W. Green, occupied a conspicuous place. The walls were lined with bookcases filled with rare editions—finely-bound books and

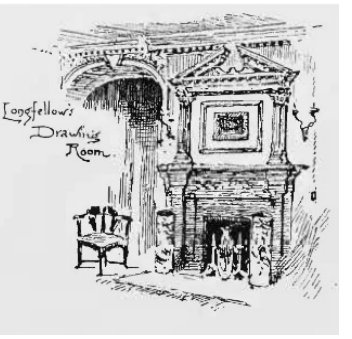
presentation copies. The room was always full of the scent of flowers; an orange tree stood in one of the windows; in the other a high desk.

Every room of the mansion contained valuable and curios or beautiful objects. It was a museum stored with relics of travels in foreign lands, with works of art and curios. The drawing-room, where, in the old days, Mrs. Washington and the General had held their simple court, was now a splendid apartment where stores of art were accumulated, and which also was sweet with tokens of home life. On the first landing of the staircase leading to the upper rooms, stood a magnificently carved Dutch clock with chimes telling the hour—

"Half-way up the stairs it stands,
It points and beckons with its hands
From its case of massive oak,
Like a monk, who under his cloak
Crosses himself, and sighs. Alas!
With sorrowful voice, to all who pass—
"Forever—never!
Never—forever!"

In spite of the rare treasures it contained, the latch of the door of Craigie House was left ever open, that all who wished might enter in.

The shadow of death, crossed the threshold of his beautiful home, and this time it came in an appalling form. Mrs. Longfellow was here burnt to death. One evening, as she was playing with her children, the draperies of her light dress caught fire, and she died of the injuries she received.




Some of Longfellow's sweetest poems were written at Nahant—his home by the sea; a green retreat, where the woods grow to the water's edge. His two-storied house,

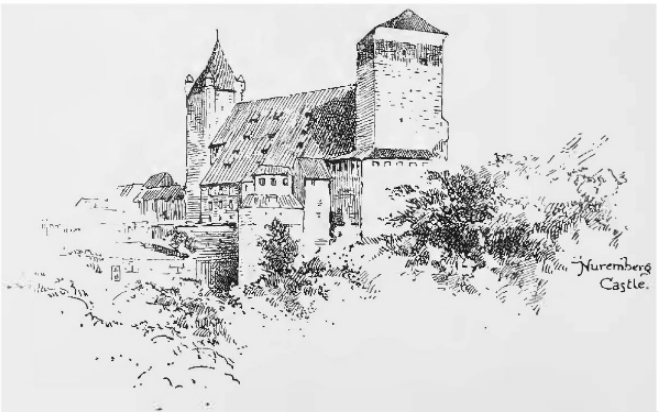
built of wood, was Italian in style, surrounded by a portico supported by pillars; it commanded a noble view of the sea and country. The airy rooms were always full of the perfume of flowers; the furniture was simple, but on the walls hung some fine pictures, and in the poet's study could always be found the newest books, and the oldest classics. Here at sunset, sweeping over the sea came borne on the wind the sound of the bells of Lyn, from the opposite shore:—

"Oh, curfew of the setting sun! O Bells of Lyn,
Oh requiem of the dying day! O Bells of Lyn!"

"The Secrets of the Sea" was inspired by the sound of the waves beating against the shore of Nahant.

Longfellow died on March 18th, 1882, in Craigie House—the beautiful home, thronged with heroic memories and poetic visions. The lilacs had not then put out their buds; and the lilac was the poet's favourite spring flower. The year before his death he had made a friend promise to place on his grave a branch of one of the lilac-trees that grow in the garden of Craigie House.

In England, Longfellow's popularity is second only to that which he enjoys in America. His bust is placed in Westminster Abbey among the poets which the nation loves to honour.



# CHARLES KINGSLEY.

TO many people, Kingsley is only a novelist—a great novelist—whose work is full of virile force, and illuminated not only by flashes of genuine insight and inspiration, but by the steady shining of a high ideal. But he is not only a novelist—he is a poet, and above all, a song-writer. Most of his novels have faults—spots on the sun—but his songs are perfect—"The Sands of Dee," "Three Fishers," and "When all the World is Young." There are no songs like these.

He was born in Devonshire, and, when he was five years' old his father went to live in Lincolnshire. Here Kingsley gathered memories of "shining water, golden reed-beds, countless waterfowl, strange gaudy insects—the wild nature of the deep fens"—memories to be set in his masterpiece "Hereward the Wake." Then the living of Clovelly was given to Kingsley's father, and the family returned to Devonshire.

For years Charles Kingsley was too poor to marry the woman he loved, but when he was made Rector of Eversley, where he had been curate, he married, and lived at Eversley, till his death.

He was a thorough sportsman, and his religious belief was only stronger than his sporting spirit. It came natural to him to talk at one moment to a man about the points of a horse, and the next about the mercy of God to sinners.

He had a full and sufficing faith, and his last words were—"It is right—all as it should be."



# SCOTT.

SIR WALTER SCOTT, like his great predecessor, Shakespeare, was passionately attached to the district in which his childhood was passed. Though born in Edinburgh, his youth was spent in the wild and romantic Border Country. It was an environment which deeply impressed and influenced the natural bent of his mind, stored with legends and traditions of the Lowlands and of the Highlands. Although he was the re-awakener of romance in fiction—a new force, and an inspiration in the literature of his day, not only in England, but also in France, Germany, and America—he is, nevertheless, in his tastes and ambition, a remarkable survival of the feudal days. The picturesqueness, excitement, and hospitality of the middle-ages, fascinated him; and it was his dream, to resuscitate this pageantry.

The novels in which he has given free play to this strongest impulse of his genius, are acknowledged to be masterpieces of historical portraiture. Love is the great teacher, and no other man has so completely caught the mediæval spirit, because no other man of our century has looked back along the dim vistas of history with so loving an eye.

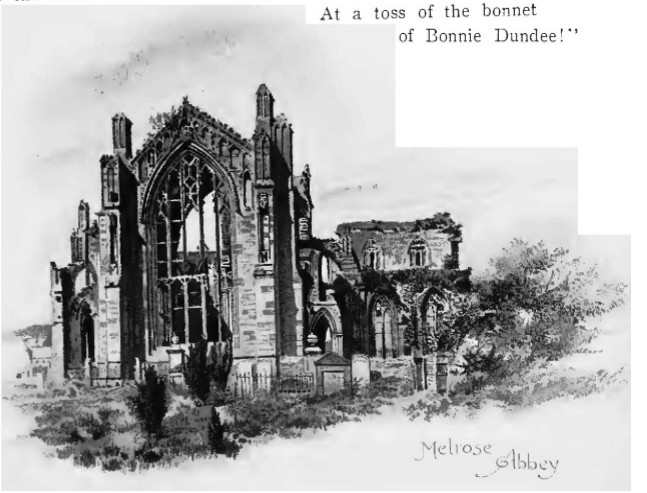
The inaccuracy of detail, to which even his warmest admirers cannot be blind, does little to mar the beauty of his work. The soul of the thing is right; the man believed in what he wrote, and this is the secret of his power.

In poetry, Scott's greatest triumphs were his ballads. There is not in the English language a more stirring ballad than "Bonnie Dundee," of which, however, few people seem to know more than the few verses usually sung.




Than this verse, no modern ballad offers us anything more fiery:

"There is brass on the target of bark and bull-hide,
There is steel in the scabbard that dangles beside;
And the brass shall be burnished, the steel shall flash free,
At a toss of the bonnet of Bonnie Dundee!"



# TENNYSON.

THERE is no public man of whom we may say, we know so little and so much, as we do of our Poet Laureate. In these days of interviewers, he has eluded every attempt that has been made to encroach upon his privacy. He remains "the poet hidden in the light of thought," and yet by this light of thought, he is intimately revealed to us. It illuminates his joys and his sorrows, and it brings out with pre-Raphaelite distinctness his haunts and his homes. The exquisitely faithful transcripts of Nature he gives us, conjure up before our mind, not only the outward features of the scene, but also arouses a corresponding sentiment in the imagination.

Mr. Grindon, the President of the Botanical Society, stated in an an address which he delivered on "The Flora of Tennyson," that the poet has mentioned some hundred flowers and trees in his works, characterizing each with an accuracy of observation, which gives an almost scientific value to his descriptions, while for poetic purposes he uses each with a delicate apprehension of its peculiarities.

By close and constant communion with Nature, our Poet Laureate has caught the very note of its soul—the gay accent in the babbling rhythm of the brook, which hurries by thirsty hills, singing:

"I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley."

contrasts with the torrent-voice of that other brook he knew so well in his boyhood.

"Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,
In every elbow and turn
The filter'd tribute of the rough woodland."

Tennyson was born in Somersby Vicarage. His earliest associations are of the fen country, the melancholy and fascination of which he has interpreted for us. He brings magically near the secret spiritual beauty of those wide horizons, "The level waste, the rounding gray," that for leagues are marked by no other tree but a poplar, "all silver-green with gnarled bark;" "The wild waste enormous, where the trenched waters run from sky to sky, emblems of eternity."

The favourite haunt of his boyhood was the "Glen," the wooded ravine from which Somersby brook issues. The pathlessness, the tangled vegetation, the depth of shade, the wind-echoing sonorities of this wild spot, impressed his imagination. In miniature it represented to him the crime and sorrow-haunted corners of the world.

Blocks of sandstone lay at the entrance of this glen. One May morning, 1824, Tennyson, then in his fifteenth year, wrote on one of these rocks "Byron is dead." The news of the death at Missolonghi had just reached the retired Lincolnshire Vicarage, and everything seemed at an end to the boy poet. "I thought nothing else mattered," he said, some time ago to a friend, as he recalled the memories of his youth.

He and his brother Charles were inseparable comrades. They are remembered by the "oldest inhabitant" of Somersby and Louth, where they went to school, as shy youths, who kept very much to themselves; Alfred, especially, was a dreamer. The poet treasures many spirited memories of his boyhood, and remembers encounters with village boys, when he and Charles held the



Somersby brook in mimic warfare against an invading force of rustic lads. Among the poet's favourite trees the poplar takes the first rank. Memories of his childhood cling round

> "Poplars four
> That stand about my father's door."

These guarding trees at the rectory gate have disappeared, but still the seven elms and the sycamore are there of which he sings in his "Ode to Memory." The house is no longer the rectory; it belongs to the Lord of the Manor, who has attached another house to the living in its stead. In one gable the boy poet had his "den," through the window an owl flew, which he tamed, talking to it with that power of reproducing the notes of birds which Lord Tennyson still retains. The rectory garden, with its trailing roses, its twilight grotto, its sweetness of purple spiked lavender, rose carnations, lilies, sunflowers, was the perfumed background to much of his life at Somersby.

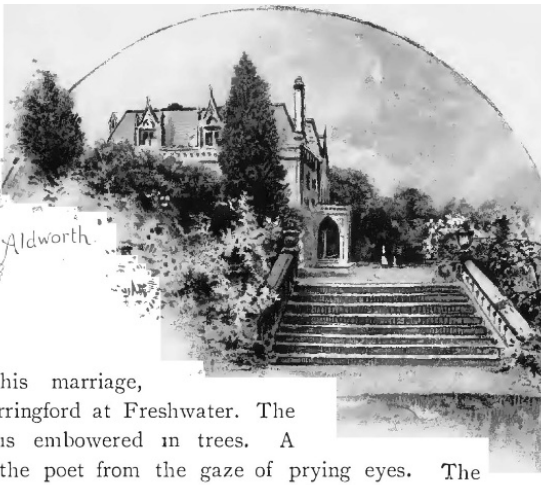
There his brother Charles put a slate into his hand one morning, and bade him write a poem on the flowers. To this garden, in later years, Arthur Hallam came constantly; and in "In Memoriam," we have the picture of idyllic days and evenings spent there. We see the

> "Witch-elms that counterchange the floor
> Of this flat lawn, with dusk and bright;
> And thou, with all thy breadth and height
> Of foliage, towering sycamore."

In "In Memoriam" also occurs the farewell to the house, that the Tennysons quitted some time after the father's death, the lament for the garden, the brook, the windy grove.

Three mills near Somersby have long contended for the honour of having suggested to the poet, "The Miller's Daughter"—the idyll that won for him the Queen's notice, and was the first step towards the laureateship. The poet has denied that any of these mills inspired the poem; if the

thought of a mill was in his mind as he wrote, it was beautiful Grantchester Mill near Cambridge — on the tree-sheltered road, up which he often walked in his student days with Arthur Hallam.




Two years after his marriage, Tennyson purchased Farringford at Freshwater. The beautiful island home is embowered in trees. A sylvan barrier protects the poet from the gaze of prying eyes. The house is roomy and unpretentious in appearance. Its chief beauty lies



in the mantle of verdure thrown over it by creepers, that covers it from base to roof. The house is situated just below the crest of the moorland hill and overlooks

"Green Sussex fading into blue,
With one grey glimpse of sea."

During the season, the poet is away; when Freshwater is comparatively empty, he returns. Then the figure of the venerable genius of the place, wrapped in a long loose cape that catches the wind, and adds to the romantic weirdness of his appearance, may be seen, pacing the summit of the down behind Farringford, with his son Hallam, or with one of his grand-children.

The house to which the Laureate resorts during the holiday season in the Isle of Wight is called Aldworth, on the top of Blackdown. It is surrounded by an open expanse of country, fragrant with heather, bracken, and wild flowers. We wade, knee deep, through the ferns and whortleberry bushes, a magic carpet of vegetation, from which the birds spring, and through which shy woodland creatures start at our approach, before we reach the gate of the solitary domain. Not a human dwelling is near. The poet lives apart, "hidden in the light of thought."

