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THESIS.

(POETRY, AN EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AGENT.)

INTRODUCTION: EDUCATION AND CULTURE.

General culture: A person is said to be cultured when he is responsive to the appeal of the finer things of life. He enjoys classical music, relishes refined and intelligent conversation, delights in studying masterpieces of painting and sculpture, and derives genuine satisfaction from visiting a gothic cathedral, where he can appreciate alike the architectural beauty of the building and the impressive sacred liturgy displayed in it.

A cultured man extends his interest also to good books, and soon develops a passion for reading, both prose and poetry. Through religion, art, music and literature, the man of culture comes into vital contact with ideas of truth, beauty and goodness. The emotions aroused in him by those refining sources are noble and elevated. Under the influence of such cultural agents, of the best and finest ideals, his habits of thinking and feeling are formed. Such a man possesses the dignity and simplicity, the ease and self-control, the poise and independence, the strength and gentility, which are the outward signs of inner culture.

Urbanity. Education is often identified with urbanity. The latter word comes from "urbs", which means city. In ancient days, the people of refinement and education dwelt in the cities; hence, the word "urbanity" to designate city customs and educated manners. In our day, that feature no longer exists. Our cities have no walls. Railways, automobiles, telephones, radios, postal service, theatrical facilities, public libraries, and free school establishments have offered educational opportunities to the poorest and the most backwards in civilization.

Merit culture: However, many prominent citizens with good clothes, two automobiles, three radios, several servants, and a fat bank account,

are lacking in the essentials of education because they have not met the best people in literature. "Tell me whom you go with, and I shall tell you what you are", is an old proverb that still stands throughout the world; and it is only by reading the best, the "pick of the flock", that one will acquire real education and culture.

Poetry is the select form used for the imaginative expression of romantic, religious, patriotic, erotic, philosophical thoughts and feelings; and to read a select class of poems is to attain an outstanding degree of education and culture that will be to us a perpetual source of enjoyment, of knowledge and material success in whatever state of life we may decide to settle.

etical values:

Poetry is a vehicle of philosophical reasoning, of psychological ideas and religious thoughts. Poetry in all its forms, whether lyrical, epic, narrative, didactic, dramatic, or satiric, embodies vital stages of real life, reechoes deep human emotions or feelings, illustrates the vital problems of the world in an imaginative vividness that offers plenty of worthy subjects to our meditation. Poetry expresses the most lofty ideals of humanity and is a source of inspiration to all who aspire at worthy achievements in any walk of life. Poetry contains the most vibrant appeal to patriotic feeling and heroic exploits. Poetry answers all the needs of the human soul even in the "mile-a-minute" life of modern times. It is an essential factor of education in the schools where the youth of every nation can absorb some of its pure life-giving waters. To deprive oneself of all the benefits that can be derived from the thoughtful perusal of poetic meditations is to condemn oneself to a lack of literary culture, the consequences of which will be felt for a whole lifetime.

CHAPTER I...POETRY AND ITS RELATION TO LIFE.

Poetry in general: It is an interesting fact to realize that, among all peoples, poetry has been the earliest form of literature. It is the natural and spontaneous expression of exalted emotion. Prose, however colorful it may be, is the embodiment of calmer thought; it comes from the intellect mostly, whereas poetry comes from the heart and reechoes the deepest feelings of man. Poetry appeals to the heart always; if it does not, it ceases to be real poetry, it becomes mere rhythmical prose. According to the nature of the feeling or thought expressed, poetry may be classified into lyric, epic, dramatic, narrative, didactic and satirical.

Lyric poetry: Lyric poetry is distinctively the poetry of emotion, of song; and, as such, it exercises a tremendous influence on the life of man. In fact, what would the world be without songs?...Lyrical poets derive their best inspirations from family affections, friendship, the past, love--the richest treasure of poetry-- sorrow and melancholy, death and immortality, all of which are vital human problems. Their lyrical songs revive in the souls of men deep emotions that produce keen joys and sorrows: two elements that constitute practically all of our human existence in this world.

Poetry, and especially lyrical poetry, is a real transfiguration of life. Lyrical poets deal with all subjects; their songs are subjective compositions, the expression of their personal experience and emotion. Their mind and soul speak to us of the colorful visions which fascinate them; they do so in lyrics that are usually contemplative and full of the choicest results of their deepest meditations. They sing religious songs expressing the devout reverence for the deity, displaying confidence and faith in the goodness of God, breathing a prayer for help in hours of difficulty and distress, and for consolation in the days of pain and affliction. "A poet", says Shelley, "is a nightingale who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are

as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician. To this, A. O'Shaughnessy adds:

"We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams"...

Elegies:

At times, we listen to mournful songs, in stately measure, praising the dead for their virtues, full of the grief that remains with the living, believing in the happiness of the departed and hoping for a blessed reunion in the hereafter.

John Robinson, a professor of Edinburgh University, relates that on the memorable night when the English troops were slipping down the St-Lawrence river to scale the steep cliff at Quebec and defeat the French on the Plains of Abraham, General Wolfe repeated nearly all of Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" to an officer who sat by him, and added afterwards: "I would prefer being the author of that poem to the glory of beating the French to-morrow." This illustrates to what extent poetry influences our lives and stirs our feelings.

Sonnets:

Besides meditative religious hymns and mournful elegies, poets have developed the sonnet form of poetic expression, which, for a time, overran all England with an overwhelming popularity. They were composed for every occasion, every event, for anything, for everybody and anybody. The sonnet, in fact, became so fashionable that professional sonneteers made it a business and actually sold their lyrical products to sophisticated buyers who would, of course, parade them as the fruit of their personal talent. Useless to say that "love" sonnets were by far the most numerous and the most popular. At times, it seemed as if the "lady friend" would not believe in the love of her "beau" unless he avowed it in sonnet form and wooed her in verse and rhyme.

Songs in antiquity:

Songs have flooded the musical world as far back as civilization can be traced. The "Psalms" of King David, the "Complaint of the prophet Jeremias, the "Canticle of Canticles", are so many

illustrations of religious songs written several centuries before the birth of Christ. Man, at all times, required a more vivid form of expression for his deep emotions than mere dull prose.

Professor Shairp explained this fact in the following way: "Whenever the soul comes vividly in contact with any fact, truth or existence, which it realizes and takes home to itself with more than common intensity, out of that meeting of the soul and its object, there arises a thrill of joy, a glow of emotion; and the expression of that glow, of that thrill, is poetry." Then, to illustrate the influence of poetry on human life, he adds: "To appeal to the higher side of human nature, and to strengthen it, to come to its rescue when it is overborne by worldliness and material interests, to support it by great truths set forth in their most attractive form, this is the only worthy aim, the adequate end, of all poetic endeavor."

Religious songs: Of course, we must admit that poetry has something of the divine in it, and ~~the~~ poetry is religious in the deepest and rarest sense of the word. Beauty is the great characteristic of poetry, whether it be beauty in form, beauty in expression, or beauty in sentiment. As the Christian religion safeguards the highest and best interests of man, so Christian poetry has been the highest and the best; its lessons have been the most inspiring; its spirit, the most sublime. One can not read, for instance, "The Burning Babe" of Southwell, "The Flaming Heart" of Crashaw, and "The Hound of Heaven" of Thompson without being deeply stirred by the religious fervor that lies beneath the lyrical charm of these pious songs.

There are other types of poetry, however, that affect the human heart in a different way, such as epic poetry, narrative poetry, dramatic poetry, didactic poetry and satiric poetry.

Didactic poetry: Didactic and satirical poetry are lower forms involving less imagination and emotion. They are addressed to the intellect or

reason more than to the heart, though they may not be devoid of feeling or emotion. Still, no one can argue that our intellect needs no food, no thought, no reasoning, no material to develop its mental powers and give to the will a proper direction for action.

Didactic poetry aims at giving instruction, as Pope's "Essay on Man" and Boileau's "Art Poétique". Satirical poetry seeks to expose evils and to work reforms, political, theatrical or social. Butler's "Hudibras" showed the ridiculous attitudes of the Puritans on questions of theology and social life. In modern times, the "Satirical Poems" of Siegfried Sassoon lash with cynical scorn some foibles of present day life.

Though satire is not always an efficient remedy against our bad habits, it obliges us to reflect about our human weaknesses and prompts us to strive at greater distinction in our manners and customs. Moreover, satire brings along with it a humorous attitude which causes smiles and gay laughter that are precious in breaking the dull monotony of every day life. Occasionally, however, satires are grossly abusive; but they are at times of such universal application that we feel how practical their statements would be even in our own day. Typical of such statements are Dryden's verses in "Absalom and Achitophel":

"A numerous host of dreaming saints succeed
Of the true old enthusiastic breed:
Against form and order they their power employ.
But far more numerous was the herd of such
Who think too little and who talk too much..."

Even though this was written in the 17th century, we still find plenty of material for thought in it that sounds realistically modern, even contemporary!...

In "The Hind and the Panther", through various animals-- each representing a form of religion-- who carry on a religious controversy, Dryden defends the Catholic Church; while he gently satirizes the erratic assumptions of adverse Protestant sects, he teaches us that the necessity of an infallible teaching authority

in religious doctrine, prompted him to turn to the Catholic Church in his quest for truth and light.

Sometimes, two or more forms of poetry are united in some unique production and achieve more results by the multiple strength of compounds. ^{weapons.} Spenser's "Faerie Queene", though epic in character, is also didactic; and, with a little more clearness in its long-wind allegory, it could have produced wonderful effects in the minds and hearts of the readers throughout the whole literary world instead of being confined within the cliffs of Dover. Moreover, many epic poems and dramatic works contain lyrical passages and songs of all types that enhance their charm and help us to absorb more freely the serious thoughts and feelingless principles that they may contain even if the latter are devoid of pleasant flattery to our pet passions and favorite habits.

All of us should feel interested some time or other in the political life of our country. In this field, poetical satire is very fertile and will help us to understand more thoroughly the evils of politics and the remedies that are destined to cure them. Of course, political passions are always violent and the tone of satire in this field is liable to be bitterly sarcastic; nevertheless a serious mind can always find in it abundant food for serious thought and consideration.

Epic poetry.

Less agreeable perhaps than lyrical poetry, but more forceful and sublime, is epic poetry, the poetry of heroic deeds, of patriotic sacrifices, of artistic sublimity, of violent passions for good or evil, of wonderful romance, of colorful idylls, of gentle pastorals or light-footed ballads. Epic poetry will make us thrill with an imaginative account of chivalrous deeds and breath-taking stories of heroic bravery; it will inspire us with lofty aspirations; it will create in us a burning desire to achieve great things in life, just like the heroes and heroines we read about. Even the style of epic poetry has a touch of majesty, of

sublimity and heroism that arouse within our soul all the cravings for super-dreams and super-deeds. Together with the sentiments, this style will freely attain a grandeur quite beyond the actual mediocrity of human life.

We are thrilled by the heroic bravery and self-sacrifice of Beowulf. The high moral tone of the Arthurian romances gives us a taste for noble chivalry and virtuous accomplishments. The quest of the Holy Grail revives our religious emotions and incite us to conceive a high ideal. The "morality" Knights of the "Faerie Queene" delights us with a lofty allegory wrapped in a tuneful melody. We read the romantic "Idylls of the King" with still more rapture and fascination than Anglo-Saxon lords and warriors of old listened to the epic songs of ancient scop and gleemen.

narrative poetry : Epic poetry is always a narration of heroic deeds; but we often deal with a narrative poem that is not epic, though it may add to our supply of lofty thoughts and noble feelings; occasionally, it might even be romantic, like "The Lady of the Lake" of Sir Walter Scott. No one will deny that the poetry of this ~~poetic~~ story is exquisite, that the descriptions of natural beauty are gorgeous though they may seem a little elaborate, that the musical tone of the verse is light and fanciful, that the characters portrayed in it are lifelike, some representing nobility at its best, some others revealing a mixture of human passions and praiseworthy Highland social traditions. Barring his freakish Brian, the Hermit, a sort of Druid priest "born between the living and the dead," all of Scott's personages in this book have some elevating quality that we can admire and imitate.

Byron's "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" contains numerous bits of brilliant and artistic description, together with several splendid meditations on life and history. With Wordsworth, we feel that the purpose of poetry is to teach the young and gracious of every age to see, to think and feel, and therefore, to become

more securely and actively virtuous. His poetry was derived not from books, but directly from life and nature. With Goldsmith, we feel sad at the plight of the "Deserted Village", and we deplore the misery of city life where so many virtuous country people immigrate, seeking to realize their romantic dreams of earthly happiness, only to find a deep disillusion, to lose their virtue and face a disastrous catastrophe.

With Chaucer, we smile at the weaknesses of human nature pictured so vividly in his prologue, and we realize that some of the portraits so humorously drawn by the keen-sighted poet would fit wonderfully well in this twentieth century society of ours, and that, even though our manners and customs have been somewhat transformed by modern inventions and conveniences, still, human nature, in its essential dispositions, passions and defects, suffers equally from the consequences of original sin, though it is still capable of holiness with the grace of God.

Dramatic poetry: No place is more fruitful in educational influences than the stage where virtues and vices are symbolized, where lifelike figures impersonate other people, give out moral statements, high-sounding truths or erroneous principles, display actual examples of care-free vices or follow the narrow path of virtue, reveal the deepest emotions of their souls and the most violent passions of their hearts. Here again, poetry is a wonderful instrument of culture. In fact, one has to reach the Elizabethan age before he can find a play written entirely in prose. Moreover, poetic dramas, whether comedies, tragedies, histories or romances, have kept on being produced and staged, long after the prose plays came into vogue.

The stage is the mirror of contemporary society. Plays will not please the public if they do not correspond to actual tastes, manners and aspirations. Dramas are very often a satire on human manners. John Lyly's "Woman in the Moone", for instance, satirizes

the woman unreservedly, making her endowed with a moral quality from each planet: melancholy from Saturn, ambition and disdain from Jupiter, a warlike temper from Mars, kindness from the sun, an amorous nature from Venus, falseness from Mercury, and madness from the Moon. Unfortunately, she stays in the moon according to her own desire, and that is why all women are essentially "foolish, fickle, franticke, madde"...Of course, this is humor and irony; but it is poetry, and it helps to postpone on our brow the wrinkles caused by worry and difficulties.

With Shakespeare, we enjoy a real banquet of poetic dramas. We see in his plays all the villainies of human nature, the gradual development of human passions, the tragic end of human vices, the romantic imagery of a supernatural world, a sound philosophy of life embodied in free-flowing conversational narrative poetry animated at times with deep feelings, violent emotions and pathetic incidents.

Later, however, domestic dramas degenerated into a display of vice on the stage by emphasizing the eternal triangle love problem, giving us instances of adultery and marital infidelity. These, together with the gory scenes of many Elizabethan tragedies, have nothing very educational or cultural to offer. Still, in the dramatic poetry of Shakespeare's time, we can find plenty that is worth being read and pondered upon, plenty that can feed our intellect and move our hearts towards a higher life and more noble achievements.

Then, the comedy of manners brought about a new style which is still quite popular to-day, and which can teach our modern society many lessons. It showed a highly satirical and moral purpose, even though it was only intended to amuse. In this field, we must evidently make a choice to avoid the evil influences of gross farce, degenerate scenes and immoral expressions often found in these

plays, even if such products of low-bred society are wrongly termed "poetical".

Most dramatists inserted lyrical poetry in their plays. This illustrates the fact that, without songs, the stage of life would be a dry, monotonous place to live in, and without emotion, man would not achieve much in the realm of art, whether that art is called painting, music, sculpture or poetical dramas.

Heroic dramas:

In the heroic plays of Dryden, we find many beneficial effects of epic poetry. The themes of these dramas are usually the conflicts of absorbing human passions: love, jealousy and honor, all raised to a transnormal height and expressed with an unusual intensity. Their characters are supermen and superwomen; and their passions are "super-love" and "super-honor". From all these "super" premisses flow a number of "super" results. The personages of these dramas must conduct themselves in a manner above the daily round of life. The verse and the vocabulary are suited to the action, and the "heroic" couplet must serve the purpose of a stilted speech. These dramas are romantic; they aim at giving to sensibility, imagination and the senses, strong impressions of a surprising and superhuman grandeur. They derive their spiritual value from the victory won by the hero over nature and the flesh.

Of course, such heroic dramas transport the mind into a domain of superiority that is somewhat unreal; but life there has splendor and beauty. The suggestion of generosity which radiates from them may ~~be~~ very well be hollow; but, in their intention, they are true; and while they are felt to be illusory, we yield to them in a certain measure.

Their diction is always sonorous, often firm and nervous, with a dense concentrated power which is evocative and expressive. The metre used is the heroic couplet, modeled on the French Alexandrine verse.

Sentimental dramas:

From an educational and cultural point of view, one has little to draw from the sentimental drama. The best of these were romantic plays, usually tragedies, in bombastic verse. The more popular productions of this era were melodramas and farces filled with stereotyped situations, stock characters, hollow moralizing, buckets of tears and gales of unreflecting laughter. From all this, the human heart and the human intellect have not much to gather towards an uplifting progress and greater perfection.

Modern drama:

The moving picture industry has dealt a hard blow to stage productions, whether the latter were written in poetry or prose. Modern drama is alive, however; it uses a setting which adds color and reality to the scenes. And vivid poetry still finds a place on the stage to soothe the hearts and enlighten the minds of men, though prose has decidedly taken the greater share in these plays.

Operas:

A novelty soon came to strike a new note in the world of poetry and resound in the greatest depths of the human heart. This was a series of comic operas where the talented poetry of W.S. Gilbert combined with the musical lyre of Sir A. Sullivan. The freshness, the cleverness, the satirical appropriateness of the verse blend themselves wonderfully with the harmony and the tunefulness of the music. For instance, the "Pirates of Penzance" is still gorgeous music to listen to for a wholesome evening of melodies and smiles, even though the plot is insignificant with regard to intrigue and suspense.

Conclusion:

Then, poetry, whether lyrical, epic, dramatic, narrative or satirical, is an absolute necessity in life; it exercises a great influence on our thoughts, feelings and passions, even if we do not always realize to what extent we are moved by so-called poetical "idle singers of an empty day!" Our education is incomplete without a knowledge and a taste for poetry, and our intellectual culture is greatly enhanced by the sound appreciation of artistic poetical achievements.

CHAPTER II...POETRY, A VEHICLE OF THOUGHT.

Philosophical:

Discussing the poetry of Swinburne, a literary critic has said: "Swinburne was no thinker, no moralist, no seer; he invented no morris chair, formulated no poetic principles, organized no school; he learned nothing even from experience, and never had an idea after he was twenty-one years old. He had nothing deep or original to sing about, but he could sing with seductive charm and a momentarily convincing assumption of genuine passion. Swinburne wrote real poetry."

Value of thoughts:

To such a soulless poetry with a musical tone, we could attach as much educational and cultural value as we would give to a frame without a picture, to a graceful tree without fruits. The perusal of musical verses brings a temporary charm to a sensual ear; but it reaches neither the head, nor ^{the} soul, nor the heart, and therefore, it exercises no influence on our life. Such poets are just real "idle singers of an empty day". They are doctors that can put a patient to sleep without curing any disease; they are dreamers of barren fantastic images and unpracticable schemes; they are temporary snake-charmers that delight an audience without teaching them anything new towards intellectual progress and lasting happiness.

Most poets deal differently with the problems of life. Instead of just ignoring the latter and singing on, they try to solve them by embodying in poetical imagery wholesome thoughts, uplifting scenes, and noble ideals, all of which can adorn the intellectual and sentimental chambers of the thoughtful readers. These poets realize that, as a primary requisite for a sound literary composition whether in prose or in verse, an author must have something to say; and then, they proceed to express their ideas and feelings in the most attractive form that they can create. This explains the fact that numerous sane philosophical ideas are contained

in the works of many poets. The reading of these works constitute a real educational and cultural banquet.

Pre-Shakespearian: The reading of Chaucer's "House of Fame" makes us realize that human reputation is an empty bubble, and earthly fame belongs to the class of "vanity of vanities" denounced by a disillusioned Solomon. From the lofty "House of Fame", the poet considers human affairs in their true perspective, or rather in their real "nothingness", even though he insists that the poet should keep on writing, regardless of the fluctuating whims of fate.

In Spenser's "Four Hymns to Love and Beauty", we learn that "of the soul, the body form doth take", that true beauty comes from the thinking of beautiful thoughts, and that, from the contemplation of beautiful objects, we rise to a perception of God's Eternal Beauty.

Lucretius and Dante, from whom so much valuable inspiration was drawn, were deep thinkers who filled their poems with profound reflections on human life and destiny.

Shakespeare: Shakespeare, in his plays, shows a penetrating knowledge of human life, though he gained it by observation rather than by philosophical analysis, and though the transcendental reflections of his actors do not reveal much philosophical insight. The great dramatist is incessantly quoted and referred to by philosophers and psychologists. We marvel at the psychological and philosophical musing of "melancholy Jaques" in "As You Like It"; we wonder at Hamlet: "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought"; we are surprised to see Romeo and Hamlet delve into abstract conceptions of metaphysics such as: "To be or not to be, that is the question"...

J. Shirley: In James Shirley, we find a remarkable philosophy of life, culminating in a vivid exposition of the transient character of earthly things, as expressed in his masque: "The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses;"

"The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things:
There is no armor against fate:
Death lays her icy hands on kings.
Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade."

Herrick:

The same type of philosophy is found in the poetry of the Cavalier poet Herrick, "the bard of fleeting life", whose verses are sometimes exquisitely sweet and graceful, though occasionally crude and vulgar. He was deeply impressed by the fact that all things decay with time, that the most entrancing beauty fades, that the sweetest violets wither and die, and he told us about it, even if, at times, he launches out into the realm of a carefree paganism illustrated by a familiar German song:

"Delight in life while its lamp yet glows,
And ere it's fading, pluck the rose."

Milton:

It is certain that the intensive reading of Milton broadens and deepens the intellect, exalts and purifies the imagination. The attentive reader of Milton will secure both learning and inspiration from contact with the Englishman's vigorous and well-disciplined mind.

Some may object, however, that in "Paradise Lost", Milton confuses our notions of the material and the spiritual, when, for instance, he pictures the rebel angels using the mountains of the earth for projectiles. To this we may answer, that poetry excludes such a precise and literal-minded attitude. Milton wants to convey an impression of tremendous conflict between powerful celestial antagonists, and he has his warriors fling at their opponents the biggest things they can find lying around... Just what men would do if they were rebel angels.

Pope:

The philosophy of Pope in his "Essay on Man" is subject to attack; and it is by no means invulnerable. The avowed intention of this didactic poet was to give a reason for his faith, to

justify Christianity and expose the errors of unbelief. But Pope was not at ease in the fields of philosophy and theology. Nevertheless, his poem "Essay on Man" abounds in vivid phrasing and contains several passages of beauty and dignity.

Wordsworth:

In Wordsworth, the "Chief of the Lake Poets", we enjoy metrical meditations on nature, life and man; meditations of a poet who tried to teach the young and the gracious of every age, to think and feel, so that they may become more securely and actively virtuous. As a rule, however, we have little need of his philosophy or of his general view of life; but we can always derive inspiration from his appreciation of nature as the handiwork of God and a solace to struggling, suffering humanity.

"Romantic" school:

In all this poetical philosophy, if we must attain educational and cultural results, we must make a choice. For instance, in all his works, Keats had no thoughts beyond the reach of our souls; and we would lose our time if we read him for knowledge, for philosophical principles or moral inspiration. Percy Shelley was a restlessly perturbed spirit, ever darkened by sad memories, unlightened by fair prospects, bereft of the consolations of belief in God our Father, and he expounded unto us a misty philosophy of life that led him to dejection and attempt at suicide, to a dejection pictured in the following pagan verses:

"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."

Byron ever appears to us like a figure of the melancholy and disillusioned gentleman, who learned from Voltaire a bitterness and cynicism and a tendency to scoff at beliefs which other men held sacred.

But we can no more argue against the philosophical thoughts

of poets because ^{of} a few erratic incidents and pseudo-philosophers, then we can assume that the airplane is a social evil because a few accidents have happened occasionally.

Psychology in poetry:

We find in poetry an immense supply of psychological truths and human feelings that deserves to be the object of careful reading. The examples of others, the weaknesses of human nature, the noble passions of the soul, the delicate feelings of the heart, the repulsive villainy of vices and the attractive beauty of virtues: all this is worthy of our consideration and careful study. By learning to examine the interior dispositions of our fellowmen, we gradually learn to know ourselves, and this is the first condition to achieve any real progress towards a higher moral perfection.

The different characters presented or analyzed in the diverse poetical masterpieces published throughout the centuries reveal to us that human nature has not changed much since Adam and Eve handed down to posterity their sad inheritance of weakness, darkness of intellect and inclination to evil. Yet, through Redemption man still keeps the possibility and the hope of soaring high above the commonplace and the vulgar; and poetry, in its passages of sublimity and grandeur, in its description of lofty moral characters, attests the truth of this assertion.

Chaucer:

Way back in the fourteenth century, Chaucer reveals to us some human characters that correspond realistically to modern dispositions and mental attitudes. The lawyer is talked about as:

"No-wher so bisy a man as he ther was
And yet, he seemed blisier than he was"...

About the "Friar" he points out that:

"His eyen twinkled in his heed aright,
As doon the sterres in the frosty night".

The clerk, the nun, the country squire, Madame Eglantine, the Wife of Bath, the doctor, the Prioress, all correspond to living

personages of the twentieth century; this statement would even apply to the saintly parish priest:

"Who attends his flock like a good Samaritan!
But Christos love, and his apostles twelve,
He taughte, and first he folwed et him-selve."

In fact, all of these characters could come back to earth and appear quite naturally human in the "rogues' gallery" of our modern society. By studying them, we learn to know ourselves and understand others.

In Tudor times, a series of poems entitled a "Mirror for Magistrates" constituted a gallery of men in high places who had suffered tribulation, in which the author asserts that: "Here, as in a looking-glass, you shall see, if any vice be in you, how the like hath been punished in others heretofore."

Shakespeare:

Shakespeare's practical psychology is beyond compare when he portrayed characters that are still alive with human feelings, vehement passions and lofty thoughts; to a remarkable degree, he possessed an uncanny knowledge of the human soul. His characters varied from vague types to clearly defined individuals; they represent all the classes of society from the virtuous and the noble to the villainous and the criminal. His poetry brought out vividly and forcefully every feature of the human personality, marvelously adapting the vocabulary to the type of character portrayed.

Macbeth reveals the steady progress of a dominant passion in a human soul, until the passion enslaves the will, blinds the intellect, corrupts the heart or hardens it against any sentiment of mercy, pity or sympathy, and leads its victim to a fatal catastrophe. It illustrates the psychological truth that man finds his punishment in the very attainment of his evil desires.

Shylock displays the pitiless schemes that greed for money and thirst for revenge can breed in the human heart. Falstaff

exemplifies the gradual weakening of the human will under the constant influence of sensual pursuits. King Lear is a powerful and soul-tracking exposition of the tragedy of old age with its childishness, its waywardness, its petulance, its pathos, its unknowing justice and inherent nobility. No textbook of psychology offers such an amount of practical knowledge of human nature as the poetical dramas of the greatest Elizabethan dramatist.

Milton:

But the high water mark of keen-sighted psychology and accurate knowledge of man's soul is "L'Allegro and "Il Penseroso" of Milton, in which he described in the minutest details and with a great delicacy of touch his own sober cheerfulness and his grave thoughtfulness with a melody of verse unparalleled in English poetry. In these two poems, he shows clearly how the same man may be subject to a great variation of mood under the influence of outside agents, or sometimes of mere inward emotions; for they evidently reflect two different dispositions of the same individual.

In "L'Allegro", he says:

"Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful jollity,
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles
Sport that wrinkled care derides
And laughter holding both his sides...
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted streams..."

And then, in his pensive mood, he bursts into another invocation which is just as sublime and solemn as the joyful tune, though it is a little more sedate in tone:

"But Hail, thou Goddess sage and holy,
Hail, divinest Melancholy!
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight,
And therefore to our weaker view
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue...."

Tennyson:

Still, when we read Tennyson's "Enoch Arden", we are amazed at the intense emotions of human beings that love one another passionately, though they deal with the self-sacrificing kind of

love, and they are willing to suffer the deepest pangs, rather than yield to selfishness and grieve hearts that are really dear to them. The three main characters of this pathetic narrative poem are keenly analyzed; and they are developed with pathos and vividness throughout the story which seems so true to life that we sympathize deeply with every one of them. We draw from the reading of this delightful love story the most noble feelings, the most charming imagery of peaceful home life, the most pathetic situations of suffering and trials, and a sweet fragrance of generosity that is quite conducive to a greater desire for self-sacrifice to promote the welfare and happiness of others around us.

Newman: Newman's "Dream of Gerontius" is a marvel of metrical variety and taste. Of this poem, Brother Leo says: "In its psychological content, it is a faithful and convincing record of human reactions to thoughts beyond the reaches of the soul; studied as an interpretation of the life and experience of man, it is a glowing and powerful commentary on what is and what is to be."

Religious thought: There is plenty of room for feeling in religion which is based on the mutual love of God and man, and poets have often expressed their sublime supernatural sentiments in aspirations towards God, although most of the religious poetry of England and America is Protestant. The latter fact, however, does not prevent passages of inspiring Christian feeling from adorning the English and American literatures. If, from the English language throughout the world, one would subtract all the religious themes, or those themes which draw their inspiration from religious sources, he would see many literary masterpieces hopelessly dismantled.

Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, Tennyson's "Idylls of the King" would both lose their charming flavor, if the one would lack the religious background of a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Thomas Becket, and the other would be without the Catholic principles of

faith and morality prevalent in the Middle Ages.

Henry Vaughan's pious themes are also refreshing and appealing, such as "The Mount of Olives" and "Flowers of Solitude". Though Shakespeare was never tortured by religious emotion, he amazes us sometimes by inserting in his plays certain extracts reflecting deep Christian thoughts like the following found in "The Merchant of Venice", where Portia, as a most worthy judge, pleads with Shylock for mercy towards the doomed Antonio:

"The quality of mercy is not strained,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blest,
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes...
But mercy is above the sceptred sway,
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute of God himself."

It seems evident indeed, that poetry is a strong and effective vehicle of thought, whether those thoughts are within the realm of philosophy, psychology or religion; and that, although poetry without substantial thoughts or objective reality may occasionally through the skill of the author, be a delicious music to the ear, if it carries no specific message to the soul, the mind or the heart, if it does not feed the imagination with clean, wholesome or artistic pictures, it is the mere beatings of wings in the void, it is a mere idle song, and it becomes an insignificant factor of education and culture.

But soulful poetry, embodying sound principles of faith and morality, emotive poetry corresponding to the real sentiments of the human soul and destined to arouse in it everything that is lofty noble and sublime, religious poetry that tends to raise the heart of man above all the things of earth and launch it into the serene sky of divine inspiration and supernatural love for the things of God: this is what creates in the human personality a grandeur and a nobility that endures and must ripen sooner or later into fruits of culture and happiness.

CHAPTER III...POETRY IN THE SCHOOL .

Primary school: School days evidently constitute the stage of life most propitious for physical, intellectual and moral development. It is when the child is young, when his intellect is fresh, his faculties are keen, his imagination is vivid and his heart is pure that it is time to sow within him the most fruitful seeds of moral education and mental culture. As a matter of fact, at least in every civilized country, the life of the school child is organized systematically to promote in every possible manner the physical health, the intellectual progress, the moral training and the religious welfare to which he has a right and which we have the duty to give him. Here again, poetry fulfills a remarkable mission.

Poetry in childhood: From the lowest classes to the highest grade, the boys and girls are thrilled by the rhythmical cadence of verses and the musical tone of the rime. The most simple songs are a source of keen pleasure to them; they will sing them to their heart's content in the street, at home, at play, all over. They are like merry nightingales anxious to sing any tune that they happen to learn. Their lively imagination is aroused easily by the flashy pictures of poetry, its unexpected metaphors, its vivid contrasts and its colorful comparisons. Ideas and feelings embodied in sprightly and melodious verses, however simple these may be, are very readily imprinted in their young minds and are more easily memorized because of their fascinating attractiveness. Small children smile with pleasure at hearing or reading "kindergarten" poems; and they remember easily, just by repeating them, such dainty passages as the following, because the latter appeal so much to their curious and constantly active senses:

"I sat on a broad stone
And sang to the birds.
The tune was God's making
But I made the words"...

And again:

"I'm hiding, I'm hiding,
And no one knows where
For all they can see is my
Toes and my hair...

Here is another that has a smell of spring in it:

"The chickadee in the appletree
Talks all the time very gently.
He makes me sleepy,
I rock away to the sea-lights.
Far off I hear him talking
The way smooth bright pebbles
Drop into water:
Chick-a dee--dee--dee--.

So through the charm and fascination of music, through the delight of simple imagery, through the charm of genuine simple feelings, the child takes contact with nature, with animals, with plants, with stars and planets, with clouds and sunshine, with flowers and trees, with rivers and lakes, with villages and cities with mountains and meadows, and all the elementary problems of real life, none of which is too vulgar to be the object of poetical stanzas.

As he grows older, his feelings are aroused by the pathos of suffering humanity, his national pride is kindled by the poetical narrative of the glorious events and heroic achievements of his ancestors or compatriots, his aesthetic sense is cultivated by dainty meditations on nature, by the enjoyment of artistic music in public concerts, over the radio, or at home, by the sight of architectural monuments or sculptural works of art.

To say that children are insensible to such intellectual pastimes is to state a general principle that is far from being proved. All children will not respond in the same degree to these elevating influences; all children will not appreciate poetry to the same extent; all the children will not love the same songs; but all of them will derive educational benefits from reading such peaceful verses on nature as the following:

"The night will never stay,
The night will still go by

Though with a million stars
You pin it to the sky,
Though you bind it with the blowing wind,
And buckle it with the moon,
The night will slip away
Like sorrow or a tune."

Children will marvel and delight at "Hiawatha's Childhood" so daintily described by the charming pen of the children's poet, Henry W. Longfellow:

"At the door, on summer evenings
Sat the little Hiawatha;
Heard the whispering of the pine-trees,
Heard the lapping of the water,
Sounds of music, words of wonder;
"Minne-wawa!" said the pine-trees,
"Mudway-Aushka!" said the water...."

and they will seek more earnestly to find out facts about Indian life, the customs and manners of the red skin, their fishing, hunting and war exploits. This is for children a lovely land of romance in which they rave to dwell. One does not have to live with them very long to discover their extraordinary skill at imitation, when they organize Indian camps and live like real Indians, hunting in gameless woods and fishing in dry brooks, shooting arrows at "deadly" enemies that never die no matter how many times they get hit, solemnly smoking the elaborate peace pipe, making a war speech with bombastic oratory not always included in Webster's dictionary, and developing an uproarious war whoop powerful enough to wake up the dead. Inspired by the marvelous exploits of Hiawatha, children become "creators"; they develop ingenuity, initiative, leadership, pluck and courage, to pursue unrelentingly the ideal of Indian prowess that the attractive hero of Longfellow has kindled in their young feverish mind.

religious poetry:

With delight and pious joy, the boy will read the religious poems that will soothe his heart, adorn his imagination with inspiring pictures, fill his mind with noble thoughts, and crowd his memory with healthful souvenirs, such as that of

Christ in the Manger on Christmas morning, the Child Jesus and the birds of Galilee, the gentle Master and the lepers of Judea, the little red breast on Mount Calvary, the glorious Resurrection on Easter morning, the lily-white host of the Tabernacle and the dazzling beauty of the Mother of Christ. The hymns that he sings in church or that he listens to, will remain engraved in his heart for life; and if, at the age of ninety, he hears again these childhood airs, the sweetest memories will crowd in his weary heart and draw from his fading eyes sweet tears of happiness at the remembrance of his joys of long ago, so pure and innocent.

ature: Children will read of hardy adventurers, seafarers, fearless trappers and "coureur-des-bois", romantic travelers cruising around the world, brave explorers following in the foot steps of Columbus landing in America in his search for a new route to India. And all because:

"Back in fourteen hundred ninety-two
Columbus sailed the ocean blue",

the youthful minds will be aglow with dreams of strange lands and far-away countries, with boundless seas and lightly sailing boats, with strange peoples living in stranger homes, obeying curious laws, following strange customs, eating unbelievable foods, enslaved by weird fashions and kept in ignorance by villainous sorcerers. These alluring and expenseless voyages in mysterious worlds will pave the way to an intelligent knowledge of the geography, history, commerce, industry, art, sculpture, architecture, painting, music and literature of many lands throughout the world, just because:

"Back in fourteen hundred ninety-two
Columbus sailed the ocean blue"...

field: Then, with John Masefield, the youngsters will sing:
"I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship, and a star to steer her by,

And the wheel's kick and the wind's song, and the white sail's ^{shaking,}
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn breaking."

That "star to steer her by" is the ideal that will bloom in the soul of a young man if poets insist in keeping before his eyes a noble aim to pursue, a success to strive at, a conquest to achieve, a glory to attain, an eternal happiness to secure.

High School poetry: Poetry accompanies the child as he grows, as he reaches secondary schools, even as he invades the University. He can hardly live without it; it is identified with everything that is worth while dreaming about, with everything that is worth while striving for, with everything that is worth while fighting for; it is an essential part of our intellectual and sentimental life.

As his mind grows, the young man develops a craze for fiction, for heroic deeds, for chivalrous pursuits and romantic incidents. To him, life appears as a gorgeous rosy dream of happiness, glory, love and success. He will sing heartily any song that will reecho the inmost aspirations of his heart and the wild dreams of his feverish mind aglow with fantasy and romanticism.

Tennyson's "Idylls of the King", Longfellow's "The Skeleton in Armor", Browning's "Hervé Riel", and Scott's "The Lady of the Lake", are typically adapted to answer the educational and cultural needs of the young man, although they do not constitute a complete program of poetry for a well-balanced High School curriculum in English. The list of recommendable books and authors is more extensive than that.

Through it all, a little humor never hurts. The boy must smile and laugh some time, and even in the classroom, a pervading spirit of good humor that remains orderly is the best weapon against the "powers of evil"; it helps the students considerably

to accept with an open mind and a ready attention the teaching of his professors. Keen wit and light-hearted fancy produce the sunshine that makes the youngsters grow in body and soul, in age and wisdom. A smile will soften the requirements of discipline, will chase away the occasional "blues" that may cloud the sky and prevent the youth from blooming prosperously into a well-balanced personality, into a sturdy character served by a clear intelligence and a serene countenance. Now, see if you can read the following lines from "Father William" and refrain from smiling:

"You are old, Father William," the young man said,

"And your hair has become very white;

"And yet, you incessantly stand on your head--

"Do you think at your age, it is right?"...

"In my youth", Father William replied to his son,

"I feared it might injure the brain;

"But now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,

"Why I do it again and again"....

Thus with adventurous musings, romantic dreams, sea voyages and land explorations, the young man living in an atmosphere of gay sunshine, moderate pleasures and wholesome humor amasses a wealth of information, learns gradually to face the struggle of life, and prepares to transpose his feelings into the sedate realm of mature age, when he will crave to rest and think, when he will look back at the long, long thoughts of his care-free youth, when the light humor of boyhood will have given place to the keen wit of a grown intellect and a ripe judgement, when his more serious mind perhaps will contemplate a serious attempt at higher learning, artistic culture, or deep aesthetic enjoyment.

University and "adult" poetry:

Here again, poetry will offer him an immense supply of material that will satisfy his most noble ambitions and loftiest

aspirations; it will give to his soul all the pleasure and comfort that it needs to proceed unrelentingly on the long rugged road to intellectual conquests and spiritual triumphs.

For a mind in this stage of life, the philosophical, psychological and religious themes discussed above will offer food and drink. Serious meditations on the beauty of nature at all times of the year will appeal to a man who has seen the illusions of his youth drop away, one after another, in front of the cold realities of a struggle for life. Almost instinctively, from the contemplation of the beauty and harmony of nature, he will rise to a vision of the divine beauty and sanctity of God, as an anonymous poet wrote it:

"I have seen dawn and sunset on moors and windy hills,
Coming in solemn beauty like slow old tunes of Spain:
I have seen the lady April bringing the daffodils,
Bringing the springing grass and the soft warm April rain.
I have heard the song of blossoms and the old chant of the sea
And seen the setting sun sinking in rapturous sight;
But the loveliest things of beauty that were ever shown to me
Are only flickering rays of God's eternal light."

Elegiac poetry:

Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard", Tennyson's "In Memoriam", and all the elegiac musings of Matthew Arnold, offer to the more mature readers, with their thoughts of passing life, themes of a serious tone; they make delightful and restful reading however, and their melancholy visions have prevented many a dizzy youth from leading a reckless life of disorder and vice. Elegies reveal to the soul the sense of values; they emphasize the transient character of worldly pleasures and earthly occupations; they oblige a logical thinker to seek the things that are above the vain and ephemeral glitter of passing fantasies.

To a serious mind craving for peaceful, realistic meditations on God's marvelous creation, the nature poetry of Wordsworth will be a real banquet; and his elegiac stanzas will provide for him a taste of thoughtful musing. A reflective lyric of James Shirley: "Death the Leveller" would help him to destroy the native pride that breeds contempt for others and exaggerated self-esteem; while it would at the same time inspire a greater desire to disregard the transitory honors and empty pleasures of this world, and seek the more lasting joys of eternity.

The following text of James Shirley is really profound:

"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 the dust"...

If men, young and old, meditated on thoughts like these, the world would not be a mass of crime, injustice and vice. It is just another version of the words of the "Imitation of Christ: "Think of your last ends, and you will not sin."

dramatic poetry: To a student that seeks a higher education, to a serious reader that strives to perfect his literary culture, dramatic poetry provides a new source of entertainment, an immense supply of intellectual thoughts and sound principles, and a "graduate" school of life where one can obtain a practical knowledge of human nature in all its different aspects.

The study of Shakespeare's classical dramas is a hard task to undertake for a young mind. The style of the great Elizabethan dramatist is quite obscure and obsolete in itself. But to a University student of literature, to a more mature intellect, Shakespeare's works are masterpieces of the stage, the study of which becomes passionating.

In the characters portrayed by the eminent playwright, one

can recognize "life-size" portraits of twentieth-century personages. Falstaff, Desdemona, Cassius, and Lady Macbeth are all more truly alive than most men and women that we meet in the street. Moreover, Shakespeare popularized or invented a vast number of phrases or epigrams that have become part of our daily and familiar speech.

Expressions like "birds of a feather", "dead as a doornail", "bag and baggage", "fast and loose", "wild-geese chase", "to the manner born", "the course of true love", "give and take", "more sinned against than sinning", are bits of glittering mosaic chipped from Shakespeare's plays.

This playwright evolved many passages of incomparable beauty and sublimity. He expressed better than any one else some profound reflection about human nature. His penetrating knowledge of human life reveals in him a keen sense of observation. The fact that Shakespeare is incessantly quoted and referred to by philosophers, psychologists and theologians prove that we can learn plenty from him if we give ourselves the trouble to study his dramatic poetry and extract all the educational and cultural essence that it contains.

From the common farce and the evident superficiality of the early comedies to the blood and thunder tone of the first tragedies, Shakespeare's genial interpretation of human life deepened into the mellow humor of "As You Like It", and the steady, searching, soul-revealing vision of Othello and King Lear.

Although the Elizabethan eagle has a humanistic spirit, and his thoughts, even when they are garbed in poetic eloquence, are earthly, he could depict with fidelity and sympathy religious persons and events. Numerous passages in his plays commemorate spiritual experience and embody religious ideals. For sure, we have much to glean from his dramatic poetry filled with wise sayings and psychological concepts, and illustrating on the stage the greatest

variety of human characters ever displayed with success by the same playwright.

Psychology in drama: Only from this last point of view of stage personages Shakespeare's plays contain a universe of various living types. Romeo, Brutus, and Hamlet are the embodiments of the meditative temperament. Cassius typifies the shrewd, double-faced schemer, and Caesar is right when he fears him:

"Give to me men that are fat--that sleep of nights--

Yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look,

He thinks too much, such men are dangerous."

Melancholy Jaques, and Touchstone, the sprightliest of all Shakespeare's fools, constitute a real contrast of characters. Jaques is a serious philosopher who can not help moralizing on everything and everybody. Touchstone can not refrain from making witty remarks about persons and things; his humor, however, has nothing to do with low farce. John Falstaff is a wit, a braggart, a glutton, a liar and a thoroughly unprincipled old rascal, all of which characteristics may be found frequently enough in certain remarkable personages of the twentieth century, though such a number of outstanding qualities are not always featured in the same individual. The surpassing oration of Mark Anthony over the dead body of Caesar is a real model of forceful and effective oratorical skill. Brutus reveals himself as an idealistic character, a reader, a thinker and a dreamer, who fails when he descends into the arena of practical life. In the facile and pleasure-loving Mark Anthony, we see a man to whom success came too easily, and who, consequently, lacked the self-discipline produced by hard struggle.

Shakespeare allows us to follow Anthony in Egypt, in another play, where we assist at the gradual deterioration of a character too weak to resist the force of passion and the

lure of sensual pleasure in his dealings with Cleopatra: which is quite a daily occurrence in our most modern times. Romeo typifies the emotion of love, and Hamlet, the emotion of self-esteem.

All these characters move about in a sea of imaginative poetry, lyrical songs, bits of wisdom and intelligent humor, the whole thing being crowned with a dramatic art that has withstood the test of more than three centuries of literary criticism and changing fashions.

Shakespeare, moreover, took his material and inspiration from the past: from Greece, Rome, Italy, France, Spain, early Britain and more recent England, and even--regardless of his personal religious belief or lack of belief--from Catholicism.

He achieved high art, which is a vision of life in terms of beauty; and any one mature enough to study his dramatic poetry will derive from it really educational and cultural values, great truths of philosophy, a new perception of moral sense and the living face of beauty which is an earthly reflection of the Heavenly Beauty that is God.

Milton:

Milton's "Paradise Lost" is another well of poetic gems. His songs make immortal music, though his sublimity is accessible only to a chosen group of scholarly readers. Some of his sonnets are the finest in the English language, and his Latin verses are the expression of genuine emotion. In his more serious works, he displayed a massive imagination, a splendid command of words and phrases; besides, he drew lavishly on the best that had been written before him.

Milton, like Dante, demands much from his readers in scholarship and application; but the intensive reading of his works broadens the soul, deepens the intellect, exalts and purifies the imagination, and initiates the ear to a new version

of entrancing word music. Milton is truly a classic; the student of literature who does not know intimately and love ardently at least one true classic: Homer or Virgil, Dante or Goethe, Shakespeare or Milton, will never enjoy the finer and deeper fruitage of literary culture.

"Paradise Lost" is a conscious attempt to justify the ways of God to men; it is an exalted poetic delineation:

"Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden."

It is one of the world's supreme epics of art, impregnated with Renaissance and classical learning, imitating the form of ancient epic poetry, and reproducing the atmosphere of the Greek drama. It is based upon a truth of human history, of human nature, recognized everywhere in all ages. It is a symphony of word music, dignified and exalted, suggesting the horn effects in Wagner and the choral strains in Handel's "Messiah". It is a vision of beauty conceived in the grand style, brought forth in reverence, and adorned with jewels of English diction.

Conclusion:

What else do we need to consider in poetry to be convinced that no school, whether elementary, secondary or higher, can afford to disregard poetry as an educational and cultural agent for the mind, the imagination, the soul, and the heart of the students, whatever their age, their character or their natural dispositions may be.

As a matter of fact, no kindergarten is without its simple rhymes and childish songs, no elementary English textbooks is without an abundant supply of clean poetry, with Longfellow's name heading the list, no secondary school program is contemplated and organized without including the analytical and literary

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study of poetical masterpieces; and the University courses also contain in extenso, the best, the most substantial and the most appealing in the field of poetry.

CHAPTER IV...POETRY AND LOVE.

Love, a noble feeling: The heart of man is made to love just like the bird is made to fly. Experience shows us that the whole life of man is a series of loves and hatreds. But the latter feeling is nothing but the negative side of love; we hate something because we love its opposite. If we detest rain and fog, it is because we like sunshine in a blue sky.

Love is therefore the great passion of man, the source of the deepest emotions and of the most vehement feelings. But poetry is the only vehicle that can suitably express such sentiments. Prose is fit only for commonplace situations; as soon as we deal with lofty thoughts, idealistic conceptions, heroic deeds, imaginative figures, deep feelings, violent emotions and vehement passions, instinctively, we change to poetry, exclaiming with a poet who denounced the insufficiency of prosaic language in the following terms:

"O empty words to convey thoughts like mine!..."

Throughout the centuries, man has loved and hated. Man has loved the woman ever since he met her in Eden; and the union of both is a sacrament of the Catholic Church sanctioned by God. Children have loved their parents, and the latter have cherished their little ones; this is so natural that the contrary would be abnormal. Such human conditions explain why in every tongue, in every clime, at all times, poets have chanted their love for something or some one, whether they called her Laura, Geraldine, or Jean.

As a matter of fact, if you put aside from the literature of any nation all the works dealing with love, with the highest and the most delicate sentiments of the human heart, there will be very little left besides a land of ruins and a mass of shambles. Heaven will be an eternity of love; hell can be but

a place of torture in endless hatred. Poets emphasize this great truth, by laying all their lyric gifts, their musical talent, their most delicate flowers of literature and their most varied hues of imagery in the paradise of love, whether human or divine.

To emphasize still more the august origin of this most noble of our faculties; we may mention that God is Infinite Love, that he loves man with a boundless affection, that he died to prove it, that he makes of charity the greatest commandment of his law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart... Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself..."

Sensuous love:

No one can deny that certain poets have degraded human love to the level of an animal gratification. In modern times, the word "love" has come to mean, in certain sophisticated ears, anything but a deep and generous affection proved by tenderness, sympathy, and especially by a generous self-sacrifice: the real trade-mark of sincere love.

But, because a few depraved hearts have thrown mud at an artistic picture, it does not destroy the intrinsic value of the painting, though we must admit that it does disfigure it momentarily. Because a few poets have translated their animal instincts into sensuous verses, they did not destroy the sublime quality of the most noble feeling of the human heart created by God to love Him eternally and to love every one else in him and for him.

Anglo-Saxon poetry was almost deprived of the civilizing influence of the love theme; but the Norman conquest put a prompt remedy to the situation. From then on, love poems are just so many gems sparkling throughout the whole history of English literature.

King Arthur:

Chivalry was an institution intended to champion the rights

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of the weak, the oppressed and the persecuted. Any woman treated unjustly by some one had the right to call on a "knight" and ask him to champion her cause and right her wrong. This explains the origin, in the Arthurian romances, of such dainty love poems as Lancelot and Elaine, Gareth and Lynette, in which the most delicate feelings are mixed with heroic deeds of chivalry and tales of human weaknesses.

But the whole atmosphere of Middle-Age chivalry is embalmed with a sweet-smelling perfume of gallant knighthood, undaunted bravery and pathetic self-sacrifice. We can not help sympathizing with the noble King Arthur suffering deeply from the treacherous infidelity of Queen Guinevere who, through her sin, has brought about the treason of Modred, and has prevented the realization of Arthur's loftiest ideals. We feel all the pang of a grieved soul reflected in those bitter words of reproach that the King throws at the guilty queen, shortly before he was setting out for battle and death:

"Thou hast ruined the purpose of my life!..."

We can not help admiring the heroic generosity of Arthur who still loves Guinevere in her sincere repentance; he forgives magnanimously her mean betrayal in spite of all its disastrous consequences and departs from her without the least hatred, without the least desire for revenge.

Ballads:

Throughout the fifteenth century, love poetry was paramount in the ballads springing from the fireside, the battle field and the glen. In love themes, the minstrels always had ready material, and their audience found a stimulus to long thoughts of the future and the past. As hatred is the reverse of the shield of love, so the ballads dealt also with family quarrels and tribal feuds.

Sonnets:

Later, the sonnet form introduced by Wyatt and Surrey into English literature provided a marvelous instrument for love

songs. Petrarca, in Italy, had sung the praises of his beloved Laura, the Earl of Surrey extolled in blazing accents the virtues of his "Fair Geraldine, bright object of his vow"; both used the sonnet form as a vehicle of their amorous yearnings. Sir Philip Sidney followed with his "Astrophel and Stella"; and Spenser sang passionately his sensual aspirations in his "Amoretti", except that in the latter case, the name of the addressee happened to be Miss Elizabeth Boyle.

Soon, the sonnet became so popular as a love song that no demand in marriage was suitable unless it was exposed in sonnet form. This became so fashionable that, as we mentioned previously, certain commercially-minded poets made it a trade to sell love sonnets for popular use, until people should become more reasonable in their emotive impulses.

Shakespeare: Such fashions invited Shakespeare to scatter in his plays numerous poems that are sparkling gems of love songs, either light and sprightly as in "As You Like It", sometimes vehement and passionate as in "Romeo and Juliet", always graceful and lyrical in any play, though at times sensuous and pagan. Several of his romances, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "A Winter's Tale", are delightful love stories.

At all times, the stage has been the favorite rendez-vous of love scenes, and poetry has always been the most appropriate expression of amorous relations.

John Milton: The Cavalier poets revealed to the world in poetic accents the sentimental heart throbs that tormented them, beginning by Herrick who wrote:

"Of bridegrooms, brides and their bridal-cakes,
Of youth and love..."

unto John Suckling whose deep emotions caused him to forget the serious side of life and to sing a few dainty care-free

songs, notably the one beginning:

"Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
Prithee, why so pale?"

In the age of Milton, in spite of Puritanism, we find Abraham Cowley writing a collection of love poems: "The Mistress". William Habington won a place on the roll of English poets by writing "Castara", a collection of poems about his wife, the most prominent of which are lyrics of a strongly religious caste, comparing the love of husband for wife to the love of the soul for God.

Robert Burns:

Most delightful is the series of love lyrics written in Scottish dialect by Robert Burns. They rank higher than most other works of erotic poetry in the universal literature that expresses intense feelings and various phases of the passion of love. They all spring from the soul. Their imagery, their comparisons and their diction are suggestive of the open fields and the cottage fireside, the rural village and the northern skies. They are conducive to lofty aspirations and delicate tenderness. We enjoy Burns; we adorn our mind and heart with his love songs, as we enjoy the wholesome, elemental things of daily life, as we are unspoiled by artificiality, insincerity and affectation.

Keats:

Keats wrote with great descriptive power, poetic glow and magnificent imagery; but his love is too paganistic to leave in the soul anything very noble or elevating. His poem, "The Eve of St. Agnes", for instance, is gorgeously but unmistakably pagan in its romantic mood, together with his fairy ballad: "La Belle Dame sans Merci". Pagan culture lacks the uplifting power that raises the soul above the sensual appetites of our human nature. However, Keats's poems may be worthy of our reading, of our study and our love, solely because they open our eyes, our minds, our imaginations and our hearts to visions

of immaterial beauty.

Christina Rosetti: Christina Rosetti, a poet of delicate fancy and of religious intensity, wrote with a childlike faith and the white-souled fervor of a medieval nun. In her "Monna Innominata," she left us a series of beautiful love sonnets, simple and passionate, delightfully musical. In the poem entitled "Dream Love", she writes:

"Young love lies sleeping
In May-time of the year,
Among the lilies
Lapped in the tender light:
White lambs come grazing,
White doves come building there:
And round about him
The May bushes are white"...

Mrs. Browning: The best-known work of Mrs. E. Browning is "Sonnets from the Portuguese", not translations, but love poems written to her husband, who used to call her "the little Portuguese" because of her enthusiasm for the poet Camoens. Several of these sonnets are among the masterpieces of love poetry in the English language.

Tennyson: In Tennyson, we find a real banquet of sound moral reading, dealing extensively with human love. His "Idylls of the King" were referred to previously, while dealing with the Arthurian romances. His sympathetic tendencies are further illustrated in "The Lady of Shalott", and especially in the triangular love plot of "Enoch Arden", a pathetic story in which every feeling is noble, generous, lofty and humanly tender.

In fact, in all the literary works of Tennyson, we find an imperturbable refinement that has everything needed to promote the educational and cultural development in the mind and heart of the reader.

Longfellow's Evangeline: When we turn to the English poetical works of America, we make discoveries that are surprisingly pleasant.

We can not help, for instance, loving affectionately the pure, spotless figure of Evangeline crushed by the most cruel trials, but remaining courageous and sublime under the sorrow, forced to exile, afflicted by the sudden death of her beloved father on the seashore, separated from her lover on the eve of her marriage, spending patiently, hopefully, long years of ceaseless search for her bridegroom across the endless plains of the American middle west, and down the rushing waters of the Mississippi.

Faithful to the last to her beloved Gabriel, and despairing to meet him again, she decided to consecrate her life to the care of the poor and the sick. During the heart-rending period of a general plague, among the numberless sick and dying that she was nursing indiscriminately at the risk of her own life, she finally recognized the worn features of her lover in the person of an agonizing man.

Through it all, everything is pure, noble, elevating, pathetic and beautiful. The long, free-flowing verses of the poem are mild and mellow. The descriptions of nature are gorgeous; the simple manners of the people of Grand Pré are true to life; the character developments are life like, and the Catholic principles of piety, christian fortitude, forgiveness of injuries and trust in Providence are faultlessly in unison with the doctrine of the Gospel of Christ.

Longfellow, the children's poet, views the theme of love once more in his charming Indian tale of "Hiawatha". This simple, straightforward child of the wilds mused within himself in accents of the plain:

"As unto the bow the cord is,
So unto the man is woman,
Though she bends him, she obeys him,
Though she draws him, yet she follows,
Useless each without the other"...

And Hiawatha, listless, longing, hoping, fearing, dreaming still of "Minnehaha", the lovely "Laughing Water" of the land of the Dakotahs, was peacefully but ardently musing and pondering within himself. Then, he revealed to old Nokomis in a sincere avowal:

"In the land of the Dakotahs
Lives the Arrowmaker's daughter,
Minnehaha, Laughing Water,
Handsomest of all the women.
I will bring her to your wigwam,
She shall run upon your errands,
Be your starlight, moonlight, firelight,
Be the sunlight of my people..."

This is the true philosophy of love: real, sincere, earnest sympathy, blind over the defects of the beloved, idealizing her personal character, visualizing ~~ix~~ her ideal beauty and loving her above all other women. This is true to life, true to the human heart as God created it, and it is fascinating in its natural ingenuity.

Longfellow delights us in another story of love in "The Courtship of Miles Standish". This time, the setting happens to be the land of the Pilgrims that reached America on the decks of the "Mayflower". It is a triangular love plot, without the traditional shooting, poisoning, hatred, or suicide, but not without the pangs of disillusion, of a heart sorely wounded by a love that was not returned, nay by a love that was given to a trustworthy friend sent as a messenger of marriage proposals.

Then, we are dumbfounded by the dramatic answer made by Priscilla, the puritan maiden, to John's plea in favor of the captain: "Why don't you speak for yourself, John Alden?..."

Later, after the plot has unfolded its pathetic incidents, we are told delightfully that:

"On ward the bridal procession now moved to their new habitation,
Happy husband and wife and friends conversing together.

Pleasantly murmured the brook, as they passed the ford in the
Forest

Pleased with the image that passed, like a dream of love through
Tremulous, floating in air, o'er the depths of the azure abysses,
Down through the golden leaves the sun was pouring its splendors,
Gleaming on purple grapes, that, from branches above them suspended,
Mingled their odorous breath with the balm of the pine and the
Wild and sweet as the clusters that grew in the valley of Eshcol!
Like a picture it seemed of the primitive, pastoral ages,
Fresh with the youth of the world, and recalling Rebecca and Isaac,
Old and yet ever new, and simple and beautiful always,
Love immortal and young in the endless succession of lovers.
So through the Plymouth woods passed onward the bridal procession".

Edgar Allen Poe: Edgar Allen Poe, when his genius was at its best, did write a few dainty love poems that adorn the American literary world. "To Helen", "To one in Paradise", "For Annie", are sincere love poems endowed with real tenderness. Poe's most delicate love lyrics, however, are by far: "To my Mother", and "Annabel Lee", where his song grows melodious and sweet:

"For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee,
And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee!
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling-my darling- my life and my bride,
In the sepulchre there by the sea--
In her tomb by the sounding sea."

Wordsworth: The peaceful nature-loving Wordsworth dealt with love in his usual simplicity. With him, we gaze upon a quiet love, sincere, but without vehemence or passion:

"She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight,
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair,
Like twilight's too, her dusky hair;

But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn;
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle and waylay."

Maternal love: Love finds a delightful poetic strain in the fragrant delicacy embalming home life; and the relation of mother and child are the object of many a charming lyric. Turn, for example, to the countless poems written about "Mother" and flooding the flowery cards addressed to her on "Mother's Day", as a token of the deepest and most tender affection flooding the hearts of children on that day... nay, of adults, too, for the blindest man is:

"Always a "little boy" to her,
No matter how old he's grown,
Her eyes are blind to the strands of gray,
She's deaf to his manly tone...
Mother, with hands toil-hardened,
Mother, in pearls and lace,
The light of heavenly beauty
Shines in your tender face!..."

A mother's love leaves in a child's soul an ineffaceable trademark of tenderness and sympathy that will maintain him in the right path, or bring him back if he should ever wander away, for.....

"The Mother's love---there's none so pure,
So constant and so kind;
No human passion doth endure
Like this within the mind..."

Conclusion: Love is evidently the greatest passion of man, the greatest source of strength and generosity. A mother will perform any heroic deed for the child that she loves. A man will make any sacrifice to please the lady of his heart. A sincere, strong, and ordinate affection is a necessity in the formation of any one's character. A man~~y~~ that cares for nobody, that has no delicacy of feeling, easily becomes a selfish brute; and again, with a misguided affection, he may also become a slave of vice. Hence, the proper education of the heart is of the greatest importance, especially during the tender years of childhood.

It is certain that the noble, lofty sentiments poetically

expressed throughout the English literature will help the reader to esteem the passion of love at its proper value and to develop a well-balanced affectionate and sympathetic tendency. A well-regulated love is a source of power for good ~~all~~ through life. One is willing to make any sacrifice for a God that he loves; there is nothing too hard for a heart that is aglow with affection; and if these affections are directed only towards worthy objects, virtues alone will be produced.

From Chaucer to our modern times, the list of poets who have sung beautifully the grandeur of this powerful sentiment and sublime emotion is very long. One does not need to waste time reading passages that extoll pagan amorous instincts when he can dip his cup into the pure fountain of God-created legitimate love, magically adorned with faeric imagery, and enchanted with rapturous music. This is the clear spring water that will make our human heart beat for anything that is pure, sublime and great, that will render our mind capable of appreciating real poetic art and of finding real pleasure in it, especially when it sings of love, human or divine.

CHAPTER V... POETRY AND PATRIOTISM.

Patriotism, an ideal: Among the ideals that poetry extols, the love of country is one of the most prominent. At all times, loyalty to the Fatherland has been one of the greatest virtues of man; and treason has always been considered as a hideous crime worthy of the most painful capital punishment, a shameful deed that stains the reputation of the guilty individual and that of his family for generations to come.

From century to century, nationalism has developed in each land. People living in the same country, speaking the same language, ruled by the same king, emperor or president, subject to the same political constitution, concerned with the same vital industrial, civic, or commercial interests, have felt more and more the inseparable solidarity of their ideals, their life, their progress and prosperity.

As a consequence, the people of the same land united more closely into an indissoluble bond of racial friendship; and they stirred up in their heart by autosuggestion, organized propaganda, patriotic education, national rallies, civic study and the building of great historical monuments commemorating the outstanding events of the nation, a deep love of country that is quite noble and praiseworthy.

Hence, nationalism was born in the world; and patriotism is now throughout the universe, a sacred feeling to be revered, fostered and admired, a sentiment to live by and a motive to die for when foreign enemies or internal traitors assail the liberties or the vital interests of the land of our forefathers, the soil of our ancestors, the home where we were born, the town where we spent our happy childhood, and where, as an adult, we are witnessing the growth of the youths of our nation, anxious to defend the rights of their fatherland against mean oppressors,

and to safeguard the interests that insure its social benefit , its material progress and prosperity.

Love of country is a deep emotion, a keen sentiment; *prose* is a poor vehicle to convey such heart throbs too deep and sublime for commonplace terms. We can easily understand, then, why all national anthems are diamonds of poetic art made to be sung enthusiastically by thundering crowds of sonorous throats. In fact, poets and musicians who composed those patriotic hymns saw to it that the latter were endowed with a contagious rhythm which, once it would be launched out, would conquer the apathy of the most indifferent, and carry ~~all~~ everybody to a pitch of enthusiastic fervor liable to develop at any time into a patriotic frenzy capable of arousing a craving for the greatest heroism.

Every country has its national poets, its national hymns, and its national heroes whose exploits constitute the subjects of epic narratives destined to enlighten the young generation and arouse them to admire the glories of the race and imitate the heroism that the forefathers have displayed in fighting to make the country great, prosperous and free, to safeguard its very existence against the unjustified attacks and cruel oppression of foreign enemies.

France has its thundering "Marseillaise", Canada sings its melodious "O Canada, terre de nos aïeux", and the United States of America entones the solemn praise of its "Star Spangled Banner".

Poems dealing with national life and patriotic feeling are numerous and most valuable to instill into the minds and hearts of readers, an educational and cultural spirit of love for the home land; a spirit that constitutes one of the main virtues of the world, since, in God's plan, the solidarity of men living in society. struggling side by side

for their very existence, is a natural feeling. Hence the love of God and the love of country are bound together in solid unity as the most sublime feeling of the human soul. "Pro Deo et Patria" is a world wide motto.

Of course, if one wishes to be really cultured and to secure educational profit from intelligent reading, he should not confine himself to patriotic poems of his own native land. There is a clear distinction between a praiseworthy spirit of patriotism and a narrow-minded attitude of chauvinism. Though we may first admire and appreciate the music, architecture, painting and literature of our own country, we might increase our stock of intellectual supplies and noble feelings by reading authors of other countries and studying the arts of foreign lands. Patriotic spirit is admirable and uplifting in any land, and heroism is to be esteemed regardless of the country to which the hero belongs. Far removed as we may be in life and thought from Switzerland and Poland, we can learn to appreciate the warlike spirit of the Polish heroes, their undaunted loyalty to their fatherland, their invincible attachment to their faith and language; and, in Schiller's drama, in the heroic struggle of William Tell, we can learn to realize the splendor of the determined Swiss fight for liberty. As the proverb says: "He that would bring home the wealth of the Indies must carry out the wealth of the Indies."

National poetry: Some English writers have expressed English social ideals, and like Kipling, have commemorated British policies. Some Canadian poets have sung with a masterful voice the glorious beauty of nature on the peaceful shores of the St-Lawrence river, on the lofty heights of the Laurentide Mountains, or across the endless plains of the fertile west. American lyrists have chanted the glory of the "Stars and

Stripes". In every land, national poetry has reached the peak of beauty and sublimity.

It is a great error and a sign of ignorance to entertain the notion that the particular country in which one happens to be born is the spot~~x~~ about which all the constellations of art and letters revolve. Unhappily, at all times, there has been a few men without a country, who are convinced that nothing has happened anywhere in literature since the eras of Pericles, Virgil or Horace. They are dead to the wholesome influence that modern literature at its best has to offer in the very land where they were born. They close their eyes to the brilliant display of poetical art evident in every contemporary national literature; they prefer to live in the past and breathe the pagan atmosphere of mythological beauty embodied in ancient Greek or Latin poetry.

However, the other extreme is also a mistake; stressing the note of nationalism in literature beyond the limits of right reason is a lamentable manifestation of mental affliction. At any rate, neither abuse destroys the educational and cultural forces lying within a right-minded patriotism and an enthusiastic national poetry.

Patriotic poetry:

Our thoughts and sentiments are evidently influenced by the books we read, by the music we hear, by the pictures we behold, by the religion we profess; and the poetry of our ancestors on the patriotic glories of our race, like the poetry of our own times on the national achievements and the noble ideals of our race, bear a paramount influence on our mind and heart.

Virgil's "Aeneid" and Dante's "Divine Comedy" voice patriotic ideals; still, there was nothing narrow, local and exclusive about their nationalism. Spenser, essentially a

national poet, sang beautifully about his dreams of patriotic glory, although there are very few works in the history of English literature that can be compared to the gross, shameless, lying flattery which Spenser proffered to his sovereign, Queen Elizabeth, who was not at all indifferent to such lavish praise.

Of all Drayton's patriotic writings, the only one which really lives is "The Battle of Agincourt", a vigorous and stirring ballad:

"Upon St. Crispin's day,
Fought was his noble fray,
Which fame did not delay
To England to carry;
Oh! when shall English men
With such acts fill a pen?...
Or England breed again
Such a King Harry?..."

Scotland:

Scotland had some heroes to celebrate: Wallace, Douglas, Robert ~~the~~ Bruce; and their exploits seemed to force poetry into existence. It was Barbour's good fortune to find a national subject of powerful interest in the remarkable personality of Robert the Bruce. His frank simplicity and ardent patriotism adorn the 13 000 lines of his "Bruce". There is a great amplitude in the ideas of freedom, patriotism, and independence which animate all these verses. Nothing is more moving than this story of a struggle for independence by a people inferior in number to their oppressors, whose yoke they had already felt, who had seized their strong places and overrun their country with soldiers. When Barbour interrupts his narrative, it is to draw from the past, lessons useful to the present; he would have Scotland keep for ever the freedom that is greater worth than all the gold in the world:

"A! fredome is a noble thing!
Fredome mays man to haiff liking;
Fredome all solace to many giffs;
He laves at ease that frely lings."

A remarkable piece of patriotic poetry is contained in Scott's "The Lady of the Lake". When the Highlanders must wage war on the lowlanders, Roderick sends his henchman Malise to summon his followers to a gathering in Lanrick mead. The fiery cross is borne eastward, passing from band to band, stopping for neither bridal nor burial, till the entire clan is summoned to the appointed place. Then, the soldiers abandon their dead relatives, the newly wed depart from their bride of a day to answer the call of the chieftain. The love of the fatherland is above all other love for them, and treason is a crime beyond all other crimes:

"Woe to the clansman who shall view
This symbol of sepulchral yew,
Forgetful that its branches grew
Where weep the heavens their holiest dew
On Alpine's dwelling low!
Deserter of his chieftain's trust,
He ne'er shall mingle with their dust,
But, from his sires and kindred thrust,
Each clansman's execration just
Shall doom him wrath and woe...
Woe to the traitor, woe!..."

land:

Irish poetry sprang from the heart of a race and voiced the eternal passion of love and hate that glowed with religious and patriotic fervor, that recalled the glories of the distant and splendid national past, and that served to keep alive racial ideals and national aspirations. Love poems and patriotic ballads constitute the bulk of unstudied literature before Samuel Ferguson and Charles Duffy. Thomas Moore did plenty to bring home to the world at large the beauty, heroism and pathos of Ireland's past. With the fervor of a true poet, Moore could eloquently expound the dominant traits of Irish poetry:

"Dear Harp of my country! in darkness I found thee,
The cold chain of silence had hung o'er thee long,
When proudly, my own Island Harp, I unbound thee,

And gave all thy chords to light, freedom and song!
If the pulse of the patriot, soldier or lover,
Have throbbed at our lay, 'tis thy glory alone;
I was but as the wind passing heedlessly over,
And all the wild sweetness I waked was thy own"...

The "Dark Rosaleen" of James Mangan, apparently a love song, soon became the voice of a nation's soul. This poem is doubly symbolic. The little "Dark Rose" is the Irish race; the poem caught and preserved the spirit of self-devotion, and inspired ardor which, even then, was urging many Irishmen to desperate uprisings, revolts and forlorn hopes:

Woe and pain, pain and woe
Are my lot, night and noon,
To see your bright face clouded so,
Like to the mournful moon.
But yet will I rear your throne
Again in golden sheen;
'Tis you shall reign, shall reign alone
My Dark Rosaleen!..."

"Here is one of the few poems which rise to heights sublime in adoring, flashing, flying, laughing rapture of patriotic passion, the chivalry of a nation's faith struck on a sudden into the immortality of music," says Lionel Johnson.

Thomas Davis was the most popular of Irish national poets; he displayed vigor of thought, picturesqueness of imagery and the knack of creating a strong and wide appeal. His "Fontenoy" is typical of his work and remains a favorite selection for recitation.

Denis MacCarthy's favorite patriotic poems published in the "Nation", a periodical, take high ranks among the lyrics of Anglo-Irish literature. The "Pillar Towers of Ireland" is another graceful, restrained, melodious offering of his talent for artistic poetry.

The United States: In America also, we find dainty patriotic lyrics and remarkable poems of far-reaching influence. The glories of

patriotic heroes have been sung by countless poets on every tone throughout the country. As Samuel V. Cole says it concerning Abraham Lincoln:

"When trembled the lamps of hope, or quite
Drew out in that furious gale,
He drew his light from the Larger Light
Above him that did not fail:
Heaven led, all trials and perils among,
As unto some splendid goal
He fared right onward, unflinching--this strong
God-gifted, heroic soul..."

Lincoln, the great national hero that freed the slaves in America and that maintained the Union within the States, is chanted exultantly in diverse other poems, such as; "O Captain My Captain" by Walt Whitman, "Our Martyr Chief" by James Russell Lowell, and "Abraham Lincoln, the Master", by T.C. Clark.

George Washington, the great leader of the American struggle for liberty against the tyrannical oppression of George III, is also the object of many patriotic accents which the American people enjoy reading throughout the land, and which the children in the schools study with noble pride:

"And this is Washington's glory,
A steadfast soul and true,
Who stood for his country's honor
When his country's days were few.
And now, when its days are many,
And its flag of stars is flung
To the breeze in defiant challenge;
His name is on every tongue." (Margaret Sangster)

"Washington's Birthday" by O.W. Holmes, "The Star in the West" by Eliza Cook, and "Our Washington" by E.W. Durbin, are so many outbursts of patriotism towards the founder of the great Republic, "one, and indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."...

Besides these leaders of a nation, there are heroic episodes in the history of the United States, where patriotic feeling was expressed in vehement passionate verses. John Whittier was strongly opposed to slavery and did everything in his power to remove this blot on American liberty and

national honor.

The heart of the world has always responded to deeds of bravery. We admire courage and loyalty to one's ideals in any land. That is why "Barbara Frietchie" by Whittier is a real gem of patriotic poetry. It is a loving tribute to a noble heart of humble origin. Surely, no one deserves the term "brave" more than Barbara Frietchie though we must concede that the numberless deeds of heroism on the world war battle field and in the present struggle are giving to Whittier's heroine a tremendous competition. At any rate, the Southern rebels, during the American civil war, were in Fredericktown; the people of the town had submitted to the invaders; the flags of the Union were torn down. For Barbara, the flag, symbol of light and law, was sacred; she was ready to give her life so that it might continue to wave over the country:

"Shoot, if you must, this old gray head,

But spare your country's flag," she said."

And her bravery won the admiration of General Jackson who had no heart to harm a soul so nobly patriotic; and now:

"Barbara Frietchie's work is o'er
And the rebel rides on his raids no more.
Honor to her! and let a tear
Fall for her sake, on Stonewall's bier--
Over Barbara Frietchie's grave,
Flag of freedom and union, wave!
Peace and order and beauty draw
Round thy symbol of light and law;
And ever the stars above look down
On thy stars below in Fredericktown..."

In Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, we find a keen patriotic spirit. He began as a youth to be an ardent patriot, and, as the years advanced, his ardor increased. There are many very tender passages in his poems about the soldiers and their country. We can not help appreciating some of these poems written during the American civil war, remembering always that his own boy was in the ranks of the Union army. Some of the

best are: "Never or Now", "One Country", "Army Hymn", "Parting Hymn", and "The Flower of Liberty".

The possible objection that such poems are antiquated because they were written years ago do not stand in front of the assertion that patriotism never dies, that it never grows old, that love of country will be a virtue as long as the world exists, that cowardice and treason will always be despicable and criminal, that the struggle for national liberty must always be carried on; the terrific battles that are now being waged in the battle fields of Europe ~~1/2~~ prove this fact decidedly. Though man may die, the country must survive, and the love of our fatherland is a feeling which every one must carry in his grave.

Thus poetry has been, and still is the most suitable vehicle for patriotic sentiments; and poets can all sing with the Americans:

"My country 'tis of Thee
Sweet land of liberty
Of Thee I sing."

CHAPTER VI.....POETRY AND MODERN LIFE.

Introduction:

One might think that in our modern times, people have no time to read poetry or they are not disposed to do so; that they are all taken up and absorbed by the grinding necessity of work or business transactions; that they are too busily engaged in the struggle for life to waste any time on such an idealistic occupation as the perusal of poetical day-dreams. Nothing is farther from the truth.

People in the twentieth century have more leisure than those of previous centuries. In practically every country, the time for work has been limited to eight hours a day. Saturday afternoons are given for rest; and holidays are more numerous than they ever were.

Of course, one must make allowance for the popularity of automobile rides, beach lounging in the summer and night clubs at all times of the year: three institutions that have made gigantic progress in the twentieth century. But, the radio has invaded every home, it has found a throne in most of the automobiles sold to-day; and, over the ether, at every hour of the day or the night, mild and mellow songs invade the hearts and the minds of numberless listeners, operas are given out from class A studios, and dramatic pieces, even in verse, are sent over the wireless. What poetry has lost in one way, it has gained in the other. At any rate, the schools teach poetry as much as at any other time; and there will always be a select class of intellectual people that will delight in the reading of literary works, whether in prose or poetry.

Fashions in poetry have a way of hanging on until they have outlived their usefulness, and a revolution is needed to establish a new system, more in keeping with the thoughts and desires of the new age. After 1910, many poets on both sides of

the Atlantic, started to write about new things in a new way, to produce another source of education and culture.

Modern poetry:

In at least three directions, the modern poets have blazed new paths. They have greatly extended the subject-matter of poetry, so as to include into it such themes as may be suggested by the variations of modern progress and contemporary life. Poetry, in fact, is the echo of the life and ideals of a generation. The twentieth century poets have brought back to poetry the speech of ordinary conversation; they have created new music by experimenting with freer and less formal rhythms, reflecting the great wave of "liberty" that is emancipating the universe, in spite of the violent reactions of dictators and aggressors. Poetry is no longer a thing apart, for the high-brow few. It is something which every one can understand and be stirred by; it is now an essential part of our present system of public education and culture.

Nature, in its many transformations, was to the Victorians a very suitable subject; and so were noble and grand aspirations like yearning for liberty and immortality, and, of course, all the consecrated stories that have stirred the world since the beginnings of literature--Helen of Troy, Paolo and Francesca, Arthur and his Knights. In that "preachy" age, it was more important to point a moral than to adorn a tale. Certain subjects, therefore, were beautiful and appropriate; others were disregarded.

But this failed to satisfy the spirited young poets of the twentieth century: the Masefields, the Lindsays, the Sandburgs and their fellows. They belonged to an era of liberty of conscience, of liberty of worship, liberty of "morals" especially; and though several of them wrote poems of high cultural value, others would not add much ethical or aesthetical

material to the educational wealth of the reader.

Everybody agrees that poetry should seek inspiration from the varied phases of life, real and concrete, and that ~~its~~ language should be that of every day speech. The wild dreams of romanticism have no more appeal in a century of realistic material progress. Sympathy for mankind combined with a deeper understanding of man, psychologically and sociologically, is still a recurring note in modern poetry.

There are a few more phases of human life about which every cultivated mind should have clear and definite notions. In the nineteenth century, Robert Browning proclaimed: "All's right with the world!"... In the twentieth century, poets are more realistic in their thoughts, they do not share such optimism because they see much that is wrong with the world; they become the spokesmen for the inarticulate millions, crushed by stark poverty and dull, monotonous jobs. Modern poets also revolt against stereotyped poetic forms; they experiment with new verse forms, as well as new subjects. One link connects present-day English poets with their predecessors: joy in the beauty of nature, which remains a constant in an otherwise variable world.

Modern subjects:

Just as artists with discerning eye found beauty where it had never been suspected before, in skyscrapers, smoking factory chimneys, the rough clothes and the hardened faces of workers, ~~and~~ a Massfield finds beauty in the rough brutal life on the sea; Vachel Lindsay stirs us with the procession of cheap automobiles honking their way across Kansas; Robert Frost finds something splendid in a shiftless farm hand; Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfrid W. Gibson portray the horrors of the trenches, and Carl Sandburg celebrates the coarseness and cunning of Chicago, "hog-butcher for the world, tool-maker,

and stacker of wheat," and writes a nocturne in a deserted brickyard! In short, any theme belonging to the life of the twentieth century provided it is seen sympathetically and imaginatively, is now felt to be suitable material for poetry.

new fashions:

In twentieth century poems, one finds a refreshing directness and naturalness of diction. At the end of the last age, poets were endeavoring mostly to use only beautiful words in the rotund and ornate manner of Tennyson. "Vermeil", "vair" and "azure" were poetic words; but as for "hog-butcher", "shack", "khaki", and "lop-sided", they were ugly and had unpleasant associations. It is clear that no real advance in giving to poetry its full educational value could be made, until poets dared to put into their verse the actual words used by the human beings for whom the poetry was written, in the actual era during which they wrote.

Formerly, poetic diction had been literary and remote from life; but the language used by to-day's poets is not much different from that which any one could speak. For the same reason, modern poetry rejects all those old-fashioned word-forms which older poets found so useful: doth, deems, 'neath, forsooth, and the like. Even in the best of its lines, poetry captures the order of words, the turns of phrase, of informal conversation.

Of all the innovations of modern verse, perhaps the most picturesque and striking is the adoption of freer and more varied meters. In the last century, one showed his skill by his ability to write regular forms of sonnets, blank verse, Spenserian stanzas, and the like; and, to deserve the approval of literary critics it was best to remain on the narrow path of iambs, trochees and anapaests.

But, "live and let live" is the motto of the

twentieth century writers, and we see how they practice this when we consider Miss Lowell's "Lilacs", Mr. Masters' "Hare Drummer" or Miss Monroe's "Winds of Texas". These poems are written in free verse, in which the lines vary in length according to the emotion and thought expressed, for poetry, even twentieth century poetry, is still the most appropriate vehicle of deep emotions, lofty feelings, imaginative conceptions and noble thoughts.

Of course, the new freedom, like all liberty, has resulted in plenty of wildness, and many bad poems have certainly been presented to the public in the name of verse. Yet, in good free verse, the meter, though not absolutely regular, is by no means formless; its educational and cultural value still ranks high and is more widespread than ever, as it is disseminated through the obligatory system of school attendance.

Moreover, it should be observed that, while many distinguished poets have written almost entirely in free verse,-- Mr. Sandburg, for instance-- others, equally distinguished, never wanted to use it, such as Mr. Frost. To-day, even, the tide has set in against free verse. Nevertheless, in most good poetry, even when written in conventional meters, you will find lilts and melodies that show new appreciation of the possibilities of the rhythm.

Markham.
"The Man with the Hoe", by Edwin Markham, was inspired by Millet's painting of the toil-worn French peasant, leaning on his hoe, looking blankly and hopelessly on the fields over which he has labored. The poem is regular in meter, conservative in style and diction. In its broad humanity, its sympathy for the down-trodden and its indignation against the unjust standards and the cruel mechanism of society, it sounds the note of the new day and reveals to the young generation the pathetic situation of the unemployed pushed out of a life-earning job

by the progress of mechanism. Let the man of to-morrow right somehow the hideous social order produced by this "monstrous thing" or let him stand prepared to reap the whirlwind:

"O Masters, lords, and rulers in all lands,
How will the future reckon with this man?
How answer his brute question in that hour
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake all shores?
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings-
With those who shaped him to the thing he is-
When this dumb Terror shall rise to judge the world,
After the silence of the centuries?..."

Housman:

One would not expect a great deal of poetry from a man so deeply absorbed in scholarship as Mr. Housman is. His "Shropshire Lad" is a melancholy book. It tells us that the best hopes are blasted, the finest lives thwarted, that faith is a dream, that death comes early and unawares. This materialist outlook illustrates the gleaming that a young man should make in his readings. It is impossible to enjoy poetical charm without absorbing some of the philosophy lying under it; and a faithless philosophy causes terrible havoc in the heart and soul of youth. Poetry is a wonderful art, just like dynamite is a powerful invention able to blast immensely valuable mineral ore for the manufacture of industrial wonders; but dynamite is a dangerous weapon in the hands of a "Hitler", and so is poetry in the hands of a materialist or an atheist.

W. Gibson:

Wilfrid W. Gibson wrote short poems painting sympathetic word pictures of the lives of the poor, the slum dwellers, the foundry workers and farm laborers. He uses rugged, irregular rhythms and plain words that give reality to the speech and lives of his workaday people. In his collection called "Fires", he shows his keen awareness of their toil and their misery. "The Furnace" vividly describes the painful glare and smoke that

nearly maddens a metal worker. "Battle" is a group of short ~~poems~~ monologues in which soldiers in the trenches voice their weariness, their hatred of filth and the strange memories of home and peacetime work that flit across their minds as they wait for the attack. The unique simplicity of Gibson's lyrics, his often grim realism, and his sympathetic imagination have helped to restore vitality to English poetry.

Robinson:

A poet of hopeless thought is Edwin A. Robinson, though he did think deeply on the problems and character. His verse is typically concerned, not with the heroes, but with the men who have failed. "The failures", he claims, "are so much more interesting". There is a word of tragedy in the individuals' futile struggles against a fate too powerful for him. In "Miniver Cheevy", he writes:

"Miniver cursed the commonplace
And eyed the khaki suit with loathing;
He missed the medieval grace
Of iron clothing.
Miniver scorned the gold he sought
But sore annoyed was he without it,
Miniver thought, and thought and thought,
And thought about it.
Miniver Cheevy born too late
Scratched his head and kept on thinking.
Miniver coughed and called it fate,
And kept on drinking."

And that is all the solution that Robinson can offer for the existence of evil and suffering in the world; that is all the consolation and hope that he can inspire to his readers. Such thoughts of his are just good enough to lead to a paganistic despair in souls that would only know how to weep without hope whenever they suffer the pain imposed by an unavoidable and heartless fate. Thank God, the twentieth century has something else to put under our eyes; and the educational dangers of a Godless poetry should be the object of a sympathetic solicitude from parents and teachers who are anxious to feed the souls of youth with the pure doctrine of Christian philosophy, and to

keep away from them the dark melancholy caused by ideas considering the existence of man on earth as a hopeless issue of crushing woes. It is a pity that such empty dreams of "idle singers" should ever fall under the eyes of a youth filled with noble thoughts, lofty aspirations and high ideals.

Johnson:

James Weldon Johnson proves that we can find more healthful ideas than Robinson's under the pen of negroes. Besides writing himself a good deal of real poetry, he edited poems of considerable range and power made by American negroes. Most of his personal work can be found in the volumes: "Fifty years and Other Poems", and "God's Trombones", seven negro sermons in verse. Folk music and folk sermons are the material in which he works most confidently. He gives expression finely and beautifully to the poetic feeling, the native melody and the traditional religion of his race. Typical of his uplifting themes is the following entitled "Go down Death":

"Weep not, weep not,
She is not dead;
She is resting in the bosom of Jesus.
Heart-broken husband, weep no more;
Grief-stricken son, weep no more;
She's only gone home!
Day before yesterday morning,
God was looking down from his great high heaven,
Looking down on all his children,
And his eye fell on Sister Caroline,
Tossing on her bed of pain.
And God's big heart was touched with pity"...
Later, in heaven:
"Jesus took his own hand and wiped away her tears,
And he smoothed the furrows from her face,
And the angels sang a little song,
And Jesus rocked her in His arms,
And kept a-saying, "Take your rest,
Take your rest--Take your rest!..."

Such thoughts are deeply moving, even if they do come from a negro; youth would find in them a real inspiration of faith in immortality, which would be a source of strength and happiness in the hours of trial that are so frequent in this valley of tears.

la Mare:

Walter de la Mare wrote charming books of verse, and has edited a fine anthology of children's poetry entitled: "Come Hither". His verse for mature readers is characterized by the same imaginative and whimsical quality, delicacy and haunting loveliness.

Frost:

Robert Frost's poems deal with the scenes, experiences and characters of rural England. These are presented with truth and sincerity, sometimes with irony, sometimes with humor, but always with sympathy and with a feeling for beauty. He gives to his verse forms in conventional metres the authentic accent of speech.

Masefield:

John Masefield's earlier lyrics, with their vivid diction and impulsive rhythms, have all the tang and movement of the sea, for which he had an irrepressible longing:

"I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
"And all I ask is a tall ship, and a star to steer her by..."

Sandburg:

In Carl Sandburg's poetry, men long inarticulate find a voice: workers in steel mills and factories, on construction gangs, roving farm-hands pitching wheat in the West and following the harvest north. He sings of smoking factory chimneys and the roar of industry, or sweat or brawn, and hard back-breaking labor. In these he finds beauty, and they become poetry under his hand. His poems have such modern titles as "Chicago poems", "Smoke and Steel", and "slabs of the Sunburnt West".

But there are softer aspects of his art. He writes as well of autumn tints, dusk, fog, cool tombs, and the grass that rebukes man's foolish strife and covers all. There is plenty of twentieth century thoughts in his work, though a little religious feeling now and then, if he had it, would soften his materialistic atmosphere.

Noyes:

Alfred Noyes's work has been called sentimental, "honeyed", demure and proper, false in its diction, jingly in

its rhythms. These charges are partly due to prejudice. Only a grouch can fail to like "Forty Singing Seamen". Its rhythm is infectious; its sailors' talk rings true; it mingles delightfully humor and marvel. Another ballad, "The Highwayman", though simple in outline, is vivid and moving. And many of the newest poets have a sneaking liking for the "Barrel Organ", with its rapid shifts of mood and its irresistible refrain: "Come down to Kew in lilac time, it isn't far from London". His best poems are in simple ballad style, which gives suitable scope to his feeling for color, for action and for lilting rhythm.

It is perhaps not too much to say that among American poets of the twentieth century, the most perfect lyric gift was possessed by Sara Teasdale. Her poems really sing. All of them are short, regular in form, simple and direct. Each expresses a single emotion that the poet has felt. No poetry of our time is "dated" less than hers. Its chaste and exquisite phrasing harmonizes with the modern passion for directness and sincerity. Many of her poems are love poems; for, love is also a very "modern" passion; we might even call it a "contemporary" feeling!... In her love ditties, the woman's sentiment is realized as seldom before in English verse. Miss Teasdale often strikes a minor key. Self-abnegation, the pain of parting, the hurt of forgetfulness, the sorrow of loss, these are often touched. Even where the emotion might be buoyant, as in the expression of the loveliness of the world in "Barter", there is a poignant wistfulness:

"Life has loveliness to sell
All beautiful and splendid things,
Blue waves whitened on a cliff,
Climbing fire that sways and sings,
And children's faces looking up
Holding wonder like a cup."

Miss W.M. Litts wrote "The Spires of Oxford" on passing through the college town in one of the early years of the war. The poem is moving without being in the least sentimental, and

its noble simplicity fits well with the modern mood in poetry:

"God rest you, happy gentlemen,
Who laid your good lives down,
Who took the khaki and the gun
Instead of cap and gown.
God bring you to a fairer place
Than even Oxford town."

One of the best of Rupert Brooke's poems is "The Great Lover" in which he tells of the things which he, the great lover of life, has found beautiful in the world. "The Soldier", owing to the circumstances of the author's death during the war, will doubtless be longest remembered. It is a serene and confident poem, written before the coming of the disillusionment that made so bitter all the later poetry of the war.

Nash:

A part of our educational and cultural system needs to smile sometimes. Without a little laughter, our life would become too strenuous for us to stand it. It is even a trade mark of a good child of God to be gay. "A saint that is morose is really a sad saint", says a French proverb. There again, modern poetry occasionally brings us a healthful laugh. Here is Ogden Nash, whose humoristic talent is undeniable. He shows that things which used to seem very serious like the discovery of America, aren't quite so serious as all that. There are jabs of satire, always good-natured, like the digs at the United States Immigration policy, at the American "phobias", and "isms", and somewhat insane enthusiasms. His very rimes are a joke; purposely, he ill treats the "King's English", but no more than the average Americans do when they are in their shirt sleeves. All this is very good fun and very clean humor. "Look what you Did, Christopher", is a ray of sunshine in life; and more poems like it are contained in his books: "Hard Lines", "Free Wheeling" and "Happy Days". To describe the American melting pot, he says:

Columbus was a cornerstone...
There came the Spaniards,
There came the Greeks,

There came the Pilgrims in leather breeks.
There came the Dutch
And the Poles and Swedes,
The Persians too
And perhaps the Medes,
The Letts, the Laps and the Lithuanians,
Regal Russians and Ripe Rumanians.
There came the French
And there came the Finns,
And the Japanese
With their friendly grins.
The Tartars came
And the terrible Turks.
In a word, humanity shot the works.
And the country that should have been Cathay
Decided to be the U.S.A."...

Miss Alice Meynell is typical of the modern spirit in literature, for she was comprehensively Catholic in her view of life and art, and garnered some of the finest fruits of the European tradition. She might be called the "Lady Poverty" of English literature. In such poems as "After a Parting", and "I must not Think of Thee", she advocates detachment from the things of this life, and practices it in her delicate and ascetic technique. She was a convert to Catholicism, and her religious faith lends a tone and a perfume to her poetry. Sorrow she knows and the problem of evil in the world; but she knows too, "little solitudes of delight", and from the bitter inexperience, presents the sweet and the beautiful. In her "The Shepherdess", she is at her best:

"She walks--the lady of my delight--
A Shepherdess of sheep.
Her flocks are thoughts. She keeps them white;
She guards them from the steep;
She feeds them on the fragrant height,
And folds them in for sleep.
She roams maternal hills and bright,
Dark valleys safe and deep.
Into that tender breast at night
The chastest stars may peep...
She holds her little thoughts in sight,
Though gay they run and leap.
She is so circumspect and right;
She has her soul to keep!...

CHAPTER VII... POETRY AND IDEALS.

Ideals:

A great life is always the echo of a great thought. A work of art has value only inasmuch as it realizes perfectly the ideal beauty dreamed of by the artist. A psychological principle asserts that an idea tends to provoke the corresponding action, especially if that idea ~~tends~~ is anchored into the soul as a strong conviction, or if it is accompanied by deep emotions. An idea reaches its maximum of power when it becomes habitual, obsessing, like a sort of fixed concept inspiring every other thought, exciting all desires, directing every action. To achieve anything worth while, we should then try to create in ourselves serious convictions, to instill into our soul strong principles that will be most powerful, if they are synthetized, unified, emphasized by a short maxim or a forceful motto that would keep them constantly present in our mind.

Real life is essentially earnest, progressive, aiming at perfection; this can be attained only by striving constantly to realize an ideal:

"Thus, to dream always about a thought divine,
To muse on it each day, and after it to pine,
To toil and sweat for it all along the day,
It is to light in us a beam of brilliant rays,
Enlightening for e'er our dark and winding ways,
It's to shape within us an ideal sublime,
And lead to happiness our soul in endless time."

Poetry:

But an ideal is something transcendental, something forceful, something far above the commonplace facts of ordinary daily life; and prose is a miserable tool to embody such sublime concepts. In fact, the creators of idealistic aspirations have at all times, enshrined their thoughts in a colorful frame of poetry. Most of the mottoes prevalent throughout the world to-day,

are extracted from poetical works. It would be a grave error to brand as idle dreams the ideals that guide human lives to higher levels, greater achievements and more glorious conquests in every realm of activity. Without ideals, nothing in the world would rise above the standard of mediocrity, nothing new would ever be created, nothing progressive would ever be launched out and pursued with success, the most sacred things in the world such as religious life, priesthood, social welfare, Catholic action, sincere patriotism, the sense of justice, of mercy and of charity, and even material progress, would soon fall in rapid decay, collapse totally, and disappear from the face of the earth.

Without ideals, men would have remained for centuries in ignorance, poverty, misery and misfortune, toiling as slaves, destroying one another, living like half-educated animal beings.

Emerson:

This is why a great many poets endowed with far-reaching visions have posted up high ideals for the inspiration of their fellowmen. Ralph Waldo Emerson expressed an invitation to pursue an ideal when he wrote: "Hitch your wagon to a star!"

Incidentally, all of Emerson's Essays are profitable to the youth of to-day, just as it was an inspiration to the youthful contemporaries of the transcendental poets. These essays still urge to greater accomplishments, to worthy achievements. While reading them, modern youths have the sensation that they are riding in an airplane. Emerson was convinced that all existence and action result from one underlying force, which we call an ideal. As he writes:

"Life is too short to waste
In critic peep or cynic bark,
Quarrel or reprimand;
'Twill soon be dark!..."

Emerson may be considered as the greatest ethical teacher in American literature. His central aim is the moral

development of the individual; he is the high priest of individualism and personality on this continent.

But still, the greatest poetry of ideals comes from the charming pen of Henry W. Longfellow. His prominent place in the world of poets and in the hearts of men has been won by the realization of a noble ideal, and the practical application of the following lines:

"The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept
Were toiling upward in the night."

The "Children's Poet" has written many lines that are worth being read and engraved within the heart of youth. His poetry takes us in an atmosphere of pure serenity and peaceful meditation on the great truths of life. "God's Acre" is a restful consideration on the vanity of earthly things and the immortality of the soul. The latter truth is, for Longfellow, a stimulus towards a good moral life and a spirit of kindness for others. His other songs embodying ideals are also worthy of consideration. "A Psalm of Life" contains lines which are the essence of simplicity; but they have instilled patience and noble purposes into a great number of humble human souls. His idealistic stanzas have affected the lives of people to the extent that, to-day, the most soothing words of consolation that one can whisper into the ear of a mournful soul grieving over the death of a beloved parent, or that one can write in a letter of condolence, is that the departed relative has "sung wonderfully his Psalm of Life". Here are some of Longfellow's words that the literary world will never forget:

"Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal...
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.

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us,
Footprints on the sands of time..."

It is Longfellow again who expressed the necessity of high motives to achieve worthy objects, to transform the apparently insignificant facts of the daily drudgery of life into momentous steps towards fame, glory, conquest, success, by the realization of a lofty dream, of a noble ideal. To illustrate this, the poet says:

"I slept and dreamt that life was beauty;
I woke and found that life was duty.
Was my dream then a shadowy lie?
Toil on, brave heart, unceasingly,
And thou shalt find thy dream to be
A noontide light and truth to thee."

In his poem "Excelsior", Longfellow aimed at displaying in a series of pictures, the life of a man of genius, resisting all temptations, laying aside all fears, heedless of all warnings, and pressing right on to accomplish his purpose.

Other poets:

Loyalty to a high ideal has been brought forward in many ways by different poets. James R. Lowell did it in "The Vision of Sir Launfal". Lanier used a river for his purpose in "The Song of the Chattahoochee". Poe consecrated his legend of "El Dorado" to this theme, and Tennyson emphasized it in "The Glean".

In "The Vision of Sir Launfal", Lowell had no idea of telling a thrilling story about a young knight; but he sought to drive home as vividly as he could, the great truth that our real opportunities for usefulness, service and achievement, lie close at hand, even at our doorsteps. Unfortunately, many people neglect the daily duties that would lead them to greatness; they dream of a faraway heroism that never comes, and they are too cowardly to perform an act of charity that is devoid of romantic glamor. To convey his lesson, Lowell chose the

legend of the Holy Grail which has become in his hands, as it has been throughout literature in general, the type or symbol of the search for the ideal, or the consecration to a high and noble purpose.

Oliver W. Holmes embodied similar thoughts in "The Chambered Nautilus". No member of the "New England" group of writers voiced higher ideals than we find in the forceful closing stanza of this poem:

"Build thee more stately mansion,
O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea."

In more recent days, Edwin A. Robinson advocated the value of an ideal in "The Master", a strongly idealistic poem inspired by Lincoln; it sounds like a spiritual challenge at times:

"Let us be the children of the Light,
And tell the ages what we are!..."

The high aim and sincerity which distinguish all of Robinson's writings are pointed out in the following eloquent counsel:

"The spirit knows no qualms,
No failure, no downfalling; so, climb high.
Take on yourself
But your sincerity, and you take on
Good promise for all climbing; fly for truth,
And hell shall have no storm to crush your flight,
No laughter to vex down your loyalty.

On the same topic, Ezra Pound, a native of Idaho, a high priest of Imagism, struck fresh notes in vigorous verses like these:

"Not dalliance, but life.
Let us be men that dream.
Not cowards, dabblers, waiters,
For dead time to re-awaken."

Time and again, throughout the realm of poetry, you meet vivid and forceful passages of idealistic thought that spur

you on to trace a deep furrow, to strive towards the heights of success, to achieve glorious conquests, no matter in what field of battle you wage the struggle of life. While reading these poems, you breathe a purer atmosphere, you live in a serene sky of healthful dreams, and you can not help saying with a poet:

"Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows!

Too low they build who build beneath the stars!"

In this earthly existence, more or less prosaic, we need something noble, speaking to us of God, of art and poesy, raising us above the low levels of cold reality; we need a few notes more tender and emotional, whose sweet harmony, like a pure echo of the infinite lyre of God, can carry our spirit in the far-away land of idealism.

"Let's go away where the hills are blue,

Blue at the foot of the sky,

And talk all day in their long blue shade

And watch the sun go by.

Then the moon will lift her gold-red disk,

And we'll dance in the mad mad night,

Till the hills spin round and the sky is drunk

With reeling worlds of light...

Footprints on the sands of time

Are not made by sitting down."

A poetic mind shares in the immensity of the world. When, outside, everything is dark and gloomy, within the soul of a poet, all seems serenely blue; his exile is a sky illuminated by lightning. The poet tears himself away from the miserable world, on wings of azure, and he climbs to dizzy heights from where he can contemplate something of the eternal beauty. But, to do this, he has to conceive an ideal worthy of fascinating

his noble soul, and seek earnestly to realize it.

Catholic ideals: Catholic ideals are pure, lofty, sublime, because they are divine. They invite to mystic relations with God, to holiness, to mercy for our brethren, to charity for the poor, for our fellowmen, even for our enemies, to real family love where they uphold the sacredness of Christian marriage, to social welfare, to the Christian education of youth, to chastity and virginity, to apostle ship throughout the world.

All these essentially Catholic ideals were thrown into the hearts of men by Christ and his host of noble-minded apostles. They reecho and embody the teaching and aspirations brought on earth by the Son of God made man. They are illustrated in such aphoristic documents as "The Sermon on the Mount" and the "Speech at the Last Supper". But they constitute rays of celestial light gleaming from the Heart of the divine Master.

Here are some of his sublime ideas: "If any one wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me...Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect...Be merciful and you shall obtain mercy...Love your neighbor, do good to them that hate you...Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar and to God the things that are God's...What God has united, let no man break asunder...Come follow me, I will make you fishers of men..."

Enlightened and encouraged by these divine ideals, man has risen to higher levels of social virtue, of holiness, of charity and justice, of chastity and missionary zeal. Poets have extolled freely each lofty theme and imprinted the ideals revealed by Christ in poetical monuments that neither time nor critics have destroyed. These gems of poetry remain in the world to exercise an educational and cultural influence on all those who would read them. It is in the nature of ideas to lead to

action, and bright rays of sunshine are bound to illumine and fascinate with dazzling beauty those on whom they happen to shine. Youth especially will profit by the perusal of poetical works dealing with Catholic ideals.

See, for instance, Sister Miriam's "The Citadel", an appeal to Catholic mysticism, interior life and spiritual solitude where the soul communes peacefully with God:

"Beyond the barriers of flesh that wall them in,
Men's souls lack potency to reach and clasp
Their dearest friends, however near; to win
A sesame to thought evading grasp--
Until emergent in a word. This prize
Of solitude is normal to a man.
Alone he ventures, conquers, loves and dies,
And has since Adam and the race began.
This inner~~er~~ world, disclose it as he may,
Invisible remains. Man's happiness,
If happiness be his, to his dismay
Is captured only here. Let none confess
Himself devoid of joy or plunged in grief
Who ~~was~~ within, this refuge, this relief.

Thompson:

In Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven", we meditate on the immortal saying of St. Augustine: "Thou hast made us for thyself o God, and our hearts can find no peace until they rest in thee"... The poem shows the weak and erring soul of man fleeing timorously from the pursuing love of God, seeking comfort in human love, in the beauties of nature, in the intricacies of art, in fairy dreams of earthly happiness; but it finds all hollow, all aloof, all unresponsive ~~tho~~ the ever-haunting boundless longing for infinite bliss. Then, it hears the voice of Eternal love tenderly inviting it to a wiser course:

"Whom wilt thou find to love, ignoble thee,
Save me, save only me?...
All which I took from thee, I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!..."

Other poets:

We can relish also the peaceful, contemplative theme of Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light". We can enjoy the religious

poems and hymns of Father Faber who invites us to higher levels and demonstrates effectively that a good hymn need not be poor poetry. And even in the semi-pagan poetry of George Russell, we find unusually beautiful verses that might have been written and sung by a pensive nun meditating in her solitary cloister, such as:

"And one thing after another
Was whispered out of the air,
How God was a big, kind Brother
Whose home is in everywhere.
His light like a smile comes glancing
Through the cool, cool winds as they pass,
From the flowers in heaven dancing
To the stars that shine in the grass.
From the clouds in deep blue wreathing
And most from the mountain tall,
But God like a wind goes breathing
A dream of Himself in all."

The Catholic ideals of marriage, indissoluble, inviolable and sacred, are the only ones which have remain pure and uncompromising throughout the centuries. The Catholic Church has never given in an inch of her strict laws against divorce and birth control in spite of the universal clamor of loose morals and free love in an era of sensual indulgence.

The great books of the world are filled with endless commentaries on the theme of love; but most of them celebrate impersonal love, frustrated love, or anticipatory love, rarely nuptial love, still more rarely, the Catholic ideal of a Christian marriage. To Coventry Patmore is given the outstanding distinction of being called: "The Laureate of Wedded Love", because he sang with power and sincerity the glories of Christian matrimony.

His "Angel in the House" contains four parts: "The Betrothal", "The Espousals", "Faithful Forever", and "Victories of Love". His theme, introduced in the "Angel in the House", developed in the "Unknown Eros", and probably completed in the lost "Sponsa Dei", is nuptial love considered as a symbol of divine love:

as man and woman are united in marriage, so God and the soul are united in religion. Human love, instead of being an obstacle to divine love, becomes, in Patmore's view, a beautiful and wholesomely natural avenue of approach to supernatural experience and eternal happiness.

Patmore's love poems are somewhat too exalted and perhaps too pure to secure popularity in an era of "Free Love", but even the casual reader finds inspiration and a vision of beauty in "The Departure", a touching memorial to his first wife, and "The Toys", which rises on the wings of superb art from the naughty boy sent off to bed to the sublime conception of the mercy of God sorry for human childishness.

Youth especially requires an ideal; it craves for something beautiful, great and sublime to envisage and strive at; and the purer, the higher the ideal, the more ardently young souls will dart towards it. Youth is the time to sow, the age when the boundless supply of energy is anxious for an outlet of activity, the time to set out on the long journey of life and to find out definitely the specific object of this voyage. Much depends on his decision; for the youth of to-day is the man of to-morrow; and the world of to-morrow will be confided to his rule; the fate of the future lies in his hands.

Youth is the age of enthusiasm without which no outstanding results can be attained. An idea that does not stir up young minds, a sentiment that does not thrill the heart of youth, a dream that does not set the imagination of youth afire, are all doomed to die in the near future. The time of youth is that of romantic visions, of dare-devil schemes and heroism. Everywhere, at all times, would-be reformers have appealed to the youth of a nation to launch out a new movement, to urge the country towards a more brilliant light, greater progress and richer prosperity;

they know that they would lose their time if they applied to stale individuals and taciturn old people for support, if they tried to enlist the energies of feelingless adults.

Youth is tied by no bonds, it enjoys all the wealth of the springtime of life. Without the cooperation of the young generation, any attempt at renewal of any kind has no chance of success. Youth is hope; it is the rainbow in the sky, displaying its colors in the sunshine.

This explains why youth likes poetry. He reads poetry, especially the one that offers him worthy ideals to pursue, high purposes to realize, romantic dreams of future grandeur to strive at, heroic deeds to achieve, worlds to conquer, obstacles to pulverize, lands to explore, miracles of valor to perform, a high degree of holiness to attain, a sublime life to embrace. To youth, a poem of Catholic ideals like the following will be a dazzling ray of sunshine and a colorful banner to wave:

"Tis hard to ascend...Narrow and steep
The path that leads above;
But virtuous deeds and thoughts sublime
Enwrap the soul in love,
In joy and peace divine...
Each one of us, in this wide world of ours,
Has a castle of dreams ahead,
As guiding light in darksome hours
On any path he thread...
Higher and yet higher
Our youth must lead its life,
Higher and yet higher
In spite of pain and strife.
Greater and yet greater
In faith, science and art,
Greater and yet greater
In soul and mind and heart.
And when our course is o'er,
When God's face we shall see,
For us no more tempests shall roar;
Conquerors we shall be!..."

The youths of every nation will keep on dreaming like Columbus on the wharf of Genoa, about strange lands, to explore, sea monsters to fight against, boundless oceans to sail over,

and new ~~w~~orlds to discover, for God and for country. They will see visions of future glory and world conquest, they will sing their "Psalm of Life" in enthusiastic accents, they will overcome the obstacles that lie on the road to greater heights, and they will find in idealistic poetry a vibrant echo to their fiery enthusiasm, repeating to them constantly, in musical and forceful ~~r~~hythmical tones:

EXCELSIOR!...

EPILOGUE.

Poetry has a soul; poetry is not only a series of verses containing musical words laid side by side for mere sound effects. Poetry contains thoughts, feelings, ideals, judgements, proverbs, principles, conclusions, narrations, history, patriotism, modern conceptions of life, everything that can contribute to increase our knowledge, purify our sentiments, enlighten us on the evils of society and the remedies which might cure them, raise our soul above the commonplace, the vulgar and the mediocre, elevate our soul to the serene atmosphere of God's eternal beauty.

No education can be complete without a serious reading of thoughtful poetry and the assimilation of all the philosophical psychological and religious thoughts enclosed within it. No life will be outstanding unless it is inspired by the highest ideals that the sublime accents of poetry can stir within our heart. We shall love our country but the more for the enthusiastic singing of the patriotic songs that national poetry contains, for the inspiring reading of all the glories of our race proudly narrated by poets who made it a duty to chant the national glories of the fatherland.

We shall love God the more for breathing the melodious and harmonious praises that religious poetry has addressed to the infinite Beauty, to the perfection of God, to the divine love that is boundlessly lovable and sweet to our hearts which sometimes grow weary of this earthly exile.

We shall love the more all our relatives and friends with a deep and pure affection, we shall be more sincere in our human loves whatever they may be, as long as they remain within the plan of God who created our heart to love Him above all other, and to love everybody else for Him and in Him.

We shall dream happy visions of glorious achievements, worthy attainments, gorgeous success in every field of human activity where duty will oblige us to enter; we shall dream of eternal happiness and joy in God's heavenly kingdom, since this world is the land of exile, and we can never hope to enjoy perfect bliss far from the home of our heavenly Father.

Yes, the reading of poetry, whether lyric, epic, or dramatic, whether narrative or didactic, will be to every one of us, a source of joy, of pleasure, of light, of love and inspiration towards something greater, more beautiful and sublime. All our faculties will find in it a pure atmosphere where they can breathe freely and ascend to unsuspected heights.

Poetry is evidently outstanding as an educational and cultural agent, in material prosperity, in the intellectual realm, in the spiritual world, in the religious sphere. It is the proper vehicle for everything that is beautiful, great and sublime.
