

## CHAPTER XIV

### NOTES ON HERRICK

IT is a very curious thing that of the masterpieces in English literature which are at once very licentious, and yet almost unmatched, in their way, as models of literary excellence, two were written by clergymen. I have already spoken to you of the wonderful prose work which has now become an English classic—the work of Laurence Sterne. But long before Sterne was born, there was another clergyman who a little resembled him in character, and who selected poetry instead of prose as a vehicle of his thought. He was the greatest of the Caroline poets—that is to say, of the poets who sang in the time of Charles the First and the Second. The Latin name for Charles is Carolus,—from which we have made the adjective Caroline.

Robert Herrick was the name of this clergyman-poet. He was born in 1591 in London, the son of a goldsmith. There was probably considerable genius in the family, for it was connected through hundreds of years with literature in some way or other. I may mention, for example, that a descendent of the Herricks became the mother of the great Swift. We do not know very much about the boyhood and youth of Herrick, but we know that he graduated at Cambridge University, and that he distinguished himself in classical studies. After this he was appointed a clergyman in a little country town in Devonshire called Dean Prior. From this position he never rose—whether through want of influence or not, we are not sure. When the Puritan government came into power they put him out of his church; but he got the position back again when Charles the Second

ascended the throne. In 1674 he died — at the great age of eighty-three.

That is all which it is necessary to know about his history, but his character certainly deserves attention. Such a man was never naturally fitted to be a clergyman. He loved the pleasures of this world as very few laymen do — good eating and drinking, out-of-door amusements, flowers and birds, and—woman! No man of the time wrote more love poetry, and very few wrote equally good love poetry. Yet, strange to say, he never married — declaring that he liked all women too much to worship only one. How much of jest and how much of earnest there was in this statement is not certain; there is no proof that he ever seriously misbehaved himself, and poverty might have been the reason that he remained a bachelor. But to judge by his poetry, one would imagine that he passed the greater part of his time in love poetry and love making, instead of attending to his duties in the church. Like Sterne, he was eccentric even in the church itself. He would write sermons, and read them to the people until they fell asleep — when he would throw the manuscript at their heads. It is not wonderful that the Puritans thought him unfit to teach religion. Another worldly trait was his love of sports, country games, dancing—in which he also resembled Sterne. Nevertheless, he seems to have been much liked. He never did harm to anybody, and his amusements were mostly of a very innocent description. Unfortunately, so much cannot be said for the whole of his poetry. He wrote much that was vulgar and even at times worse than vulgar. But the best of his poetry was of extraordinary beauty — we have nothing to compare with it after his time until we come to Blake. And this poetry shows the man in a good light. It is evident that one who could write so simply and joyfully about life must have had a good heart. He never took religion very seriously, because he was too healthy, too energetic, too naturally happy, to trouble himself about the question of a future life. But he wrote religious poetry also, showing us

that he thought of God as a very good-natured person like himself who was not going to be angry with a man for his taking a little amusement.

To-day Herrick is more read than he was during his life-time, and yearly many new editions of his works are issued, some of them beautifully illustrated. One reason for the increasing popularity of this old poet is certainly that he reflects the love of English customs and manners that have been rapidly passing away since the introduction of railroads and telegrams. But a deeper and better reason is that he possesses, to a most eminent degree, one quality extremely rare in poets of the nineteenth century,—I mean simplicity. We are feeling more and more every year how great a quality this is, because modern life and modern education make simplicity of thinking almost impossible—much more, simplicity of expression. If you understand that simplicity means truthfulness—truthfulness in feeling and in expression—you will better perceive what I mean. The times in which we live are artificial; the time in which Herrick lived was more natural, and so far as the good side of life was concerned, much happier. And this reflection of old time happiness and joyousness is the great secret of Herrick's charm.

You will have seen a great many pieces from Herrick in the anthologies; even children learn something of Herrick by heart. What I am trying to do now is to give you examples of the best class of those lyrical pieces which you will not find in the ordinary anthologies. Whether you will be pleased or not I don't know; but I believe that you cannot fail to perceive how pretty many of the thoughts are, and how remarkable the effect that the singer can produce with words of only one and two syllables where a modern poet would certainly use many long and sonorous words of Greek or Latin derivation. And remember that this Herrick was also a good Latin and Greek scholar, yet he knew how to use all the beauties of his mother tongue without going to the classics for verbal inspiration.

The whole work of Herrick may be divided into the profane poems, called "Hesperides," and the religious poems, called "Noble Numbers." But the profane poems may be again divided broadly into epigrams and true poems. The epigrams are simply worthless; there is nothing in them either of genius or talent. It is in the epigrams that Herrick chiefly disgraced his real place as a poet. But I am not anxious to call attention to his faults—we shall speak only of his beauties, and make our first selection from "The Hesperides." The poems in "The Hesperides," which are nearly one thousand in number, and very short for the most part, contain a great many compositions on the subjects of flowers, of love, and of human happiness. The last mentioned class represents what we might call Herrick's philosophy; the other two classes represent his sense of duty. Let us begin with the subject of flowers,—I think that some of his compositions upon this theme will remind you, more than once, of Japanese poems treating of like things. For example, here is a little poem addressed to cherry-blossoms.

Ye may simper, blush and smile,  
And perfume the air awhile;  
But, sweet things, ye must be gone,  
Fruit, ye know, is coming on;  
Then, ah! then, where is your grace,  
Whenas cherries come in place?

This is so very simple, childish in fact, so far as language is concerned, that you may not perhaps at once perceive the real merit of it. The philosophy is implied only, not expressed, but the thought is the same as that of many eastern poems upon the same subject—with this important difference, that the flowers are personified. The word "simper" is only used in regard to women. It means to make one's face seem as pretty and as modest as possible for the sake of pleasing men. The poet thinks of cherry flowers as beautiful young girls who wish to please by their

smiles and pretty ways; but smiles and pretty ways have very little influence in this world where interest is concerned. Fruit — that is, material value — is more important by far than mere outward charm; the world wants substantial worth.

Again let us take this little poem about fields in the autumn season. The poet personifies the fields, and addresses them as if they were sad people.

Ye have been fresh and green,  
Ye have been fill'd with flowers,  
And ye the walks have been  
Where maids have spent their hours.

You have beheld how they  
With wicker arks did come  
To kiss and bear away  
The richer cowslips home.

You've heard them sweetly sing,  
And seen them in a round:  
Each virgin like a spring,  
With honeysuckles crown'd.

But now we see none here  
Whose silvery feet did tread,  
And with dishevell'd hair  
Adorn'd this smoother mead.

Like unthrifths, having spent  
Your stock and needy grown,  
You're left here to lament  
Your poor estates, alone.

This has been called one of the prettiest poems in the whole of English literature, and I am sure that you will wonder why. Certainly it is not because of the mere language used, neither is it because there is any strange or new idea in the composition. It is because the little verses, describing only what everybody has seen, produce in the

mind a gentle melancholy such as everybody must have felt in walking through the forests in the later autumn. Then the grasses have become withered and brown, the flowers are dead, the insects have stopped singing, perhaps a cold wind is blowing under a grey sky, and the children who used to play in the grass every day do not come to play any more. Then you think about the beautiful blue skies of summer that used to be seen over the meadow, and the flowers that used to sprinkle the grass, and the games of the children; wherefore the melancholy of the change comes upon you. That is why everybody likes this poem so much. But there are in it some allusions which are only English, and may need explanation. Herrick is speaking of the young girls, who, in England, love to gather flowers in the field and bring them home to decorate their rooms. It may seem strange to you to read of girls kissing the flowers, but should you ever observe little English girls playing, you would observe that they kiss any inanimate object that gives them pleasure—a picture, a bird, a flower, a pet kitten, or a little dog; for it is the instinctive impulse of affection with western people to touch the lips to anything liked. The third verse refers also to something particularly English, a country dance and song—girls, especially, dancing in a circle, or, as the poet calls it, a “round.” Formerly garlands of flowers were worn in the hair on such occasions, and a pretty country girl, so crowned with flowers, might have seemed to the poet like the goddess of the spring. The rest of the poem, I think, needs no explanation.

Here is a little poem about daffodils. We do not find in English other poetry about cherry flowers and daffodils until we come to the days of Wordsworth and of George Meredith. But if Herrick seems to you too simple, try to remember that he represents the sixteenth century, not the nineteenth.

Fair daffodils, we weep to see  
You haste away so soon;

As yet the early-rising sun  
Has not attain'd his noon.  
Stay, stay,  
Until the hasting day  
Has run  
But to the evensong ;  
And, having prayed together, we  
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,  
We have as short a spring ;  
As quick a growth to meet decay,  
As you, or anything.  
We die,  
As your hours do, and dry  
Away,  
Like to the summer's rain ;  
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,  
Ne'er to be found again.

This poem is somewhat more reflective than the greater number of Herrick's verses. Of course there is no new thought for you in these lines. The comparison of flower life to human life is very old indeed—it was made by the Buddha before the English language had been formed. But it is not necessary, to make a good poem, that the thought should be new—it is necessary only that the thought should be spoken in some new way. Herrick's way is the charm here. Within only a few lines he expresses all the sadness of human existence, and this is the language of a child—simple and sweet as anything that could be said.

Now let us read a little composition about violets. I suppose you know that in the flower-symbolism of the west the violet is the emblem of feminine modesty and gentleness ; therefore it is that many English girls are called Violet. The flower, in its wild state, never grows very tall, and is generally found in shady places, half hidden among tall plants. Thus it seemed to poetical fancy as if modestly trying to hide its face, like a young girl.

Welcome, maids-of-honour,  
You do bring  
In the spring,  
And wait upon her.

She has virgins many,  
Fresh and fair ;  
Yet you are  
More sweet than any.

You're the maiden posies,  
And so grac'd  
To be plac'd  
'Fore damask roses.

Yet, though thus respected,  
By-and-by  
Ye do lie,  
Poor girls, neglected.

The violet is a very small flower, with a very delicate fragrance ; probably it was not as much cultivated in private gardens during Herrick's day as it is to-day. As it is the first English flower to appear in spring, he poetically calls it the spring's maid-of-honour ; you know that the maid-of-honour walks before the queen usually to announce her coming. At that season everybody is delighted with violets, because there are no other flowers, but later in the season larger and prosperous flowers appear, and then the violets are neglected. So in the human world, young people who really deserve to be loved because of their modesty and gentle-heartedness are likely to be little cared for when brought into rivalry with women who are much more clever and cunning, and probably less pure-hearted. I may mention that roses are compared by western poets especially to women, mature women rather than young girls. Tennyson helped to change the general rule when he wrote "Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls." But even here we must notice that although the rose is compared to a



girl, it is compared to a queen among girls,—other girls are only rosebuds. At all events, in Herrick's time and even to-day a woman rather than a girl would be compared to a rose. A maiden only should be compared to a violet. To some degree the violet in western symbolism represents what the plum flower represents in Japanese symbolism—although the lily shares the moral honours. On the other hand, roses have no particular moral significance; they signify beauty only. I think that western poets may be said to use roses as symbols of feminine beauty, somewhat as Japanese poets use the symbolism of the cherry flower.

Occasionally Herrick follows the classic way in speaking of flowers, but even then he remains very simple in his art. Notice this little poem about lilies.

White though ye be, yet, lilies, know,  
From the first ye were not so;  
    But I'll tell ye  
    What befell ye:  
Cupid and his mother lay  
In a cloud, while both did play,  
He with his pretty finger press'd  
The ruby niplet of her breast;  
Out of which the cream of light,  
    Like to a dew,  
    Fell down on you  
And made ye white.

Besides this charming Greek fancy about the milk of a goddess being made of light (a fancy by which the ancients used to account for the existence of the milky way, said to be created by the drops of milk that fell from the breast of the mother of Zeus), notice how very simple the language is. There is no apparent attempt at art anywhere; the only uncommon word is the diminutive "niplet" instead of the modern nipple. But the grace of the word seems familiar, and Herrick excels in this exquisite use of uncommon and caressing diminutives. You may never have seen the word before, but the moment that you see it you know

what it means, and you wonder why nobody else ever thought of using it. Another charming example of such invention is to be found in Herrick's epitaph upon a young mother who died soon after giving birth to a girl-baby.

As gilliflowers do but stay  
To blow, and seed, and so away ;  
So you, sweet lady, sweet as May,  
The garden's glory, lived a while  
To lend the world your scent and smile.  
But when your own fair print was set  
Once in a virgin flosculet,  
Sweet as yourself, and newly blown,  
To give that life, resigned your own:  
But so as still the mother's power  
Lives in the pretty lady-flower.

The word "flosculet," although almost pure Latin and very rare, is here felt to be the most natural as well as the most delicate word that possibly could be used. You do not need to look at a dictionary to know what it means; and it is an illustration of the fact that whenever Herrick does use a Latin or Greek word, he only does so because he is able to produce with it an effect that no English word could give. Observe also the use of the word "print." "Print" here means an image or exact likeness, in the sense of copy. Herrick was thinking of the child's resembling the mother, as two prints taken from the same picture would resemble one another.

I have often thought that Herrick more resembles the Japanese poets than almost any other English writer, not only because of his love for very short and delicate kinds of verse, but because he frequently expresses in these little stanzas thoughts that very much resemble, in their simple grace, the thoughts of some far eastern poets; and even when the thoughts are not at all the same, the way in which they are uttered may remind you of Japanese verses. Here, for example, is a little poem about a kind of thorny plant which has a very beautiful and fragrant flower. In

securing a spray—or, as the poet calls it, “a sprig”—of this plant, to give a young lady, the poet has pricked his fingers, which gives him an occasion to utter a tiny bit of philosophy.

From this bleeding hand of mine  
Take this sprig of eglantine,  
Which, though sweet unto your smell,  
Yet the fretful briar will tell,  
He who plucks the sweets shall prove  
Many thorns to be in love.

“Briar,” a common word for many kinds of thorny creeping plants, refers here to the eglantine. “Prove” is used in the Elizabethan meaning of “to learn by experience.” “Sprig” is still excellent English, but is not often used to-day in the pages of poets; it has become somewhat colloquial.

A larger poem, or rather song, contains some similes which you will recognize as having been used many centuries ago by Chinese and Japanese poets. This little song is still sung in England, and it is certainly interesting to find a song that is still popular after its author has been dead two hundred years.

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,  
Old time is still a-flying :  
And this same flower that smiles to-day  
To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,  
The higher he's a-getting,  
The sooner will his race be run,  
And nearer he's to setting.

In the poetry of the Far East it is generally the moon that is thus referred to, but the thought is quite the same, and is expressed quite as briefly. I need not cite the whole poem,—not because everybody knows it, but because the other two stanzas are not remarkable. But though the

imagery be oriental in a way, the melancholy is not. It is the melancholy of the old Roman poets, of Catullus and Horace especially, whom Herrick studied and imitated very successfully. They felt, as we feel in the East, the sadness of the impermanency of life; but being of a naturally joyous character, this feeling only stimulated them to enjoy life as much as possible. Let us eat and drink and love, for to-morrow we die—that was the philosophy, the common sense philosophy, of the antique world; and the old Greeks had it too. There is preserved a curious Greek epitaph, which seems strange to modern minds, but which faithfully expresses the same conception of life. “Thou hast eaten of the banquet; thou hast taken thy fill; there is no reason for regret.” In another poem of Herrick’s, which you will find in almost any collection of English lyrics — “Corinna’s Going A-Maying”—there is a verse of the same kind which is worth quoting in this connection.

Come, let us go while we are in our prime;  
And take the harmless folly of the time.  
We shall grow old apace, and die  
Before we know our liberty.  
Our life is short, and our days run  
As fast away as does the sun;  
And, as a vapour or a drop of rain  
Once lost, can ne’er be found again,  
So when or you or I are made  
A fable, song, or fleeting shade,  
All love, all liking, all delight  
Lies drowned with us in endless night.  
Then while time serves, and we are but decaying,  
Come, my Corinna, come, let’s go a-Maying.

This is paganism, pure and simple; but it is also the paganism of the Renaissance. It appears in the famous song of Lorenzo de Medici, beginning—

Fair is youth and void of sorrow,  
But it hourly flies away

—which you will find so often quoted in literary history. Indeed the greater part of Herrick's poetry is altogether pagan, but the paganism is of a very healthy kind. When he speaks of death or of the future, he never speaks like a Christian priest, but always like some old Roman or Greek philosopher,—not of course a great philosopher, like Plato, or like Lucretius, but like a student of epicureanism. Here we have a song about what becomes of the body of man after he is dead; there is not even the shadow of a Christian thought in it—it might have been written by a thorough materialist.

You see this gentle stream that glides,  
Shov'd on by quick succeeding tides;  
Try if this sober stream you can  
Follow to th' wilder ocean;  
And see if there it keeps unspent  
In that congesting element.  
Next, from that world of waters, then  
By pores and caverns back again  
Induct that inadult'rate same  
Stream to the spring from whence it came.  
This with a wonder when ye do,  
As easy, and else easier too,  
Then may ye recollect the grains  
Of my particular remains,  
After a thousand lusters hurl'd  
By ruffling winds about the world.

But with this affectation of pagan sadness we find a very good and vigorous optimism in Herrick. If he is sad at moments when thinking about old age and death, he is never sad in the presence of misfortune. Once when he found his sight beginning to fail, he wrote a poem on the subject; again when friends and relations died, he made the most cheerful verses upon their loss. Real unhappiness he never allowed himself to have. What better way of meeting trouble could we imagine than that implied in the following verses addressed to "Fortune":

Tumble me down, and I will sit  
 Upon my ruins, smiling yet;  
 Tear me to tatters, yet I'll be  
 Patient in my necessity.  
 Laugh at my scraps of clothes, and shun  
 Me, as a fear'd infection;  
 Yet, scare-crow-like, I'll walk as one  
 Neglecting thy derision.

The man who can defy misfortune after this fashion is naturally the man who, in spite of his love of life, knows how to be content with very little. All his life Herrick lived upon very little, and knew how to enjoy himself without money. He has described for us in a famous verse the manner in which he lived—enumerating all his small possessions :

Though clock,  
 To tell how night draws hence, I've none,  
     A cock  
 I have to sing how day draws on.  
     I have  
 A maid, my Prew, by good luck sent  
     To save  
 That little Fates me gave or lent.  
     A hen  
 I keep, which creaking day by day,  
     Tells when  
 She goes her long white egg to lay.  
     A goose  
 I have, which with a jealous ear  
     Lets loose  
 Her tongue to tell that danger's near.  
     A lamb  
 I keep (tame) with my morsels fed,  
     Whose dam  
 An orphan left him (lately dead).  
     A cat  
 I keep that plays about my house,  
     Grown fat  
 With eating many a miching mouse.

To these  
A Tracy I do keep whereby  
I please  
The more my rural privacy ;  
Which are  
But toys to give my heart some ease ;  
Where care  
None is, slight things do lightly please.

How he could keep from being sometimes melancholy, except in his verses, we can understand from a little bit, the rhymed advice which he gives to his readers—certainly the best possible advice of its kind.

In all thy need be thou possess'd  
Still with a well-prepared breast ;  
Nor let the shackles make thee sad ;  
Thou canst but have what others had.  
And this for comfort thou must know,  
Times that are ill won't still be so.  
Clouds will not ever pour down rain ;  
A sullen day will clear again.  
First peals of thunder we must hear,  
Then lutes and harps shall stroke the ear.

For Herrick's philosophy we have said enough in quoting these little pieces ; it was simply the philosophy of mother wit, which is perhaps the best philosophy of all as a guide in life.

Of course you will see that one who could be always content with the country, with the simplest of food, and with the dumb companionship of cats and dogs and other little animals, could not care very much for the vagaries and the conventions of fashion. Herrick lived in ages of fashion, he was the last of the Elizabethans, he witnessed the time of the Cavaliers,—and after the days of Cromwell he saw the luxury of the Restoration. But he liked nature and truth ; and his dislike of the artificial in the habits and customs of his epoch inspired one little verse, now famous,

from which many nineteenth century poets, including Moore, have found inspiration. It is entitled "Delight in Disorder."

A sweet disorder in the dress  
Kindles in clothes a wantonness :  
A lawn about the shoulders thrown  
Into a fine distraction :  
An erring lace which here and there  
Enthrals the crimson stomacher :  
A cuff neglectful, and thereby  
Ribbons to flow confusedly :  
A winning wave, deserving note,  
In the tempestuous petticoat :  
A careless shoe-string, in whose tie  
I see a wild civility :  
Do more bewitch me than when art  
Is too precise in every part.

The poet speaks here out of his heart without deeply thinking, but he utters a very deep æsthetic truth, which all great artists have recognized from ancient times. Dress ought to be only a means of enhancing natural beauty—of calling attention to it; and when the dressing is too exquisite, too correct, the attention is drawn away from the beauty of the person to the beauty of the clothes. Moreover, under such circumstances, you perceive that the woman wants her clothes to be admired, which suggests a very unsubstantial character. Again, it is quite true that a slight appearance of carelessness or indifference in female dressing has its moral as well as its æsthetic charm. You say to yourself, on observing it, "That girl does not wish to be too much admired," and this idea pleases; it implies a certain modesty of disposition. But Herrick does more than utter truth here; he shows a most æsthetic ingenuity in the use of words. "A winning *wave* in the *tempestuous* petticoat," is simply delightful in its comparison of the undulations of a woman's dress to the motion of the waves. Of course you know that the dress of western women has for thousands of years—that is to say, from old Greek times—been



contrived upon a plan almost exactly opposite to that of the dress of women of the Far East. The dress of Japanese women fits loosely above and closely below the hips. The dress of a western woman fits tightly above and loosely below; and consequently the lower part of the dress *undulates*—that is to say, makes wave-like motions when she walks. And whereas the eastern woman steps from the knee, the western woman steps from the hip, so that her body swings somewhat as she walks, and her robe swings at the same time alternately to left and right. Herrick has another little poem on this subject in which he shows the same genius in using curious words—or, better, in the curious use of words:

Whenas in silks my Julia goes,  
Then, then, methinks, how sweetly flows  
The liquefaction of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes and see  
That brave vibration each way free;  
O how that glittering taketh me!

By “glittering” we may understand the shining of the silk; the poet is equally charmed by the light and by the motion of the robe. I do not think that you will find in any English poem the same use—extraordinary use—of the word “liquefaction.” But no other word could be used with such wonderful effect. To-day the proper meaning of this word is melting, turning into liquid; but Herrick gives it something more of the Latin meaning, which is wider than the modern English meaning. “Vibration” here has the sense of liberation—a swinging from right to left, an oscillation like that of the pendulum of a clock. “Brave” in the language of Herrick’s time did not simply mean courageous; it meant much more often “splendid.” It is by little touches like this that the student learns to like Herrick, but it requires a certain amount of patience to find these beauties in the great mass of verses which he wrote.

I only want to interest you a little in certain verses of

Herrick's. You will find many other verses of his in different collections of English poetry. He is well known to students through certain poems of praise addressed to Ben Jonson, whom he knew and loved; also through poems about old English country games, holidays, and superstitions—few of which could interest you. My hope is that you will see how much real literary merit may be found in his little pieces about flowers and women and simple country life. There is only one other class of his poems to which I wish to invite your attention; that is the religious poem. At times this curious man imagined himself a great sinner, and expressed regret that he had written so many naughty poems which a clergyman should not have written. When these fits of remorse came upon him, he would ease himself by writing religious poetry—sometimes good, sometimes very bad. But when his religious poetry is good, then it is worthy of very high praise in English literature; and it is marked by the same qualities of simple beauty which distinguished the best of his secular poetry. One poem of the religious class is all that I intend to offer you, but I am inclined to believe that you will like it. It is called “The White Island”—

In this world, this isle of dreams,  
While we sit by sorrow's streams,  
Tears and terrors are our themes  
Reciting :

But when once from hence we fly,  
More and more approaching nigh  
Unto young Eternity

In that whiter island, where  
Things are ever more sincere;  
Candour here, and lustre there

There no monstrous fancies shall  
Out of hell an horror call,

To create (or cause at all)  
Affrighting.

There in calm and cooling sleep  
We our eyes shall never steep;  
But eternal watch shall keep,  
Attending

Pleasures, such as shall pursue  
Me immortalised, and you;  
And fresh joys, as never too  
Have ending.

This has been very much admired, and justly, because of the simple and beautiful way in which great faith and hope are expressed. I suppose you know that it is said nobody sleeps in heaven. Sleep is the result of the withdrawal of the sun's light; but in a world without night (and modern astronomers tell us that there are really such worlds lighted by two suns instead of one), there would be no sleep. The adjective "white" to signify luminous or shining is not common as Herrick uses it, but it is very beautiful and scientifically very true, so far as our knowledge of the highest form of luminosity is concerned.

A curious thing about Herrick is the way in which the man remained always outside of his own century. He was in poetry, although we call him a Caroline poet, the very last of the Elizabethan writers; he was born a little too late to feel quite at home in the new order of things. Therefore he would never mix with it. And he never even tried to.

He was content to live alone in his little country village, and to remain poor, although he might have been rich, rather than lose that independence of thought and custom which he loved, and which belonged not to his time but to "the spacious times of great Elizabeth." All about him the world was shaking as with earthquake,—and he scarcely knew it; he half awoke for one moment only, and dreamed again. The king and the parliament were at war—he heeded not. The king was defeated, captured, tried, condemned and

executed; yet Herrick, who really loved the king, scarcely understood what was really going on. He was first fully awakened only when the Puritan government sent its officer to turn him out of his little country home. Then he went with regret to the metropolis and wrote poems there to console himself, until Charles the Second came to restore him to his parsonage. After that came the days of the Restoration, the days of wicked drama and wicked morals, the days when England was suffering from something much worse than civil war—something that might be described as a moral earthquake. Milton argued and wrote and died; a new materialistic philosophy appeared; everything changed, and seemed in danger of changing for the worse. But Herrick never troubled himself in the least about all these things. He continued in his solitude to write little verses about bees and butterflies and honey and kisses of girls and the gods of Greece and Rome and the customs of Christmas and of May-day. So he lived and died, entirely apart from his own time. And perhaps this is why we like him so much. In an age of corrupt hearts, he kept the joyousness and simplicity of a child—sometimes of a naughty child, but never of a very bad child. He kept close to nature in his best moods, when the fashionable world had already begun to desert nature, and to prepare the way for the artificial falsity of the eighteenth century. And I think that it is for this reason also that Herrick remains the only Caroline poet worthy of close study of Japanese students. Of course there are other great poets of the time—such as Donne and Crashaw and Carew—men who lived when Herrick lived, and who followed to some extent Elizabethan traditions. They are great in a certain way; but they are much less important for your particular studies. The English language has changed very much since those times, and therefore very few writers of the latter part of the sixteenth or the early part of the seventeenth century can be recommended to you. But in Herrick's particular case, the language has changed but little. His simplicity of heart kept

his style so pure and his language so vital that you can read him to-day with advantage to your knowledge of English. I could not say this even about the great poet Milton. A careful study of Milton would be likely to do you more harm than good. A careful study of Herrick could only do you good—and that in the best of all directions, in the study of daintiness of feeling united with perfect simplicity and clearness of expression.