

CHAPTER XV

ON LOVE IN ENGLISH POETRY

I OFTEN imagine that the longer he studies English literature the more the Japanese student must be astonished at the extraordinary predominance given to the passion of love both in fiction and in poetry. Indeed, by this time I have begun to feel a little astonished at it myself. Of course, before I came to this country it seemed to me quite natural that love should be the chief subject of literature; because I did not know anything about any other kind of society except Western society. But to-day it really seems to me a little strange. If it seems strange to me, how much more ought it to seem strange to you! Of course, the simple explanation of the fact is that marriage is the most important act of man's life in Europe or America, and that everything depends upon it. It is quite different on this side of the world. But the simple explanation of the difference is not enough. There are many things to be explained. Why should not only the novel writers but all the poets make love the principal subject of their work? I never knew, because I never thought, how much English literature was saturated with the subject of love until I attempted to make selections of poetry and prose for class use—naturally endeavouring to select such pages or poems as related to other subjects than passion. Instead of finding a good deal of what I was looking for, I could find scarcely anything. The great prose writers, outside of the essay or history, are nearly all famous as tellers of love stories. And it is almost impossible to select half a dozen stanzas of classic verse from Tennyson or Rossetti or Browning or Shelley or Byron, which do not contain anything about kissing, embracing, or longing for

some imaginary or real beloved. Wordsworth, indeed, is something of an exception; and Coleridge is most famous for a poem which contains nothing at all about love. But exceptions do not affect the general rule that love is the theme of English poetry, as it is also of French, Italian, Spanish, or German poetry. It is the dominant motive.

So with the English novelists. There have been here also a few exceptions—such as the late Robert Louis Stevenson, most of whose novels contain little about women; they are chiefly novels or romances of adventure. But the exceptions are very few. At the present time there are produced almost every year in England about a thousand new novels, and all of these or nearly all are love stories. To write a novel without a woman in it would be a dangerous undertaking; in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the book would not sell.

Of course all this means that the English people throughout the world, as readers, are chiefly interested in the subject under discussion. When you find a whole race interested more in one thing than in anything else, you may be sure that it is so because the subject is of paramount importance in the life of the average person. You must try to imagine, then, a society in which every man must choose his wife, and every woman must choose her husband, independent of all outside help, and not only choose but obtain if possible. The great principle of Western society is that competition rules here as it rules in everything else. The best man—that is to say, the strongest and cleverest—is likely to get the best woman, in the sense of the most beautiful person. The weak, the feeble, the poor, and the ugly have little chance of being able to marry at all. Tens of thousands of men and women cannot possibly marry. I am speaking of the upper and middle classes. The working people, the peasants, the labourers, these marry young; but the competition there is just the same—just as difficult, and only a little rougher. So it may be said that every man has a struggle of some kind in order to marry, and that

there is a kind of fight or contest for the possession of every woman worth having. Taking this view of Western society, not only in England but throughout all Europe, you will easily be able to see why the Western public have reason to be more interested in literature which treats of love than in any other kind of literature.

But although the conditions that I have been describing are about the same in all Western countries, the tone of the literature which deals with love is not at all the same. There are very great differences. In prose they are much more serious than in poetry; because in all countries a man is allowed, by public opinion, more freedom in verse than in prose. Now these differences in the way of treating the subject in different countries really indicate national differences of character. Northern love stories and Northern poetry about love are very serious; and these authors are kept within fixed limits. Certain subjects are generally forbidden. For example, the English public wants novels about love, but the love must be the love of a girl who is to become somebody's wife. The rule in the English novel is to describe the pains, fears, and struggles of the period before marriage—the contest in the world for the right of marriage. A man must not write a novel about any other point of love. Of course there are plenty of authors who have broken this rule, but the rule still exists. A man may represent a contest between two women, one good and one bad, but if the bad woman is allowed to conquer in the story, the public will growl. This English fashion has existed since the eighteenth century, since the time of Richardson, and is likely to last for generations to come.

Now this is not the rule at all which governs the making of novels in France. French novels generally treat of the relations of women to the world and to lovers, after marriage; consequently there is a great deal in French novels about adultery, about improper relations between the sexes, about many things which the English public would not allow. This does not mean that the English are mor-

ally a better people than the French or other Southern races. But it does mean that there are great differences in the social conditions. One such difference can be very briefly expressed. An English girl, an American girl, a Norwegian, a Dane, a Swede, is allowed all possible liberty before marriage. The girl is told, "You must be able to take care of yourself, and not do wrong." After marriage there is no more such liberty. After marriage in all Northern countries a woman's conduct is strictly watched. But in France, and in Southern countries, the young girl has no liberty before marriage. She is always under the guard of her brother, her father, her mother, or some experienced relation. She is accompanied wherever she walks. She is not allowed to see her betrothed except in the presence of witnesses. But after marriage her liberty begins. Then she is told for the first time that she must take care of herself. Well, you will see that the conditions which inspire the novels, in treating of the subject of love and marriage, are very different in Northern and in Southern Europe. For this reason alone the character of the novel produced in France and of the novel produced in England could not be the same.

You must remember, however, that there are many other reasons for this difference—reasons of literary sentiment. The Southern or Latin races have been civilized for a much longer time than the Northern races; they have inherited the feelings of the ancient world, the old Greek and Roman world, and they think still about the relation of the sexes in very much the same way that the ancient poets and romance writers used to think. And they can do things which English writers cannot do, because their language has power of more delicate expression.

We may say that the Latin writers still speak of love in very much the same way that it was considered before Christianity. But when I speak of Christianity I am only referring to an historical date. Before Christianity the Northern races also thought about love very much in the same way

that their best poets do at this day. The ancient Scandinavian literature would show this. The Viking, the old sea-pirate, felt very much as Tennyson or as Meredith would feel upon this subject; he thought of only one kind of love as real—that which ends in marriage, the affection between husband and wife. Anything else was to him mere folly and weakness. Christianity did not change his sentiment on this subject. The modern Englishman, Swede, Dane, Norwegian, or German regards love in exactly that deep, serious, noble way that his pagan ancestors did. I think we can say that different races have differences of feeling on sexual relations, which differences are very much older than any written history. They are in the blood and soul of a people, and neither religion nor civilization can utterly change them.

So far I have been speaking particularly about the differences in English and French novels; and a novel is especially a reflection of national life, a kind of dramatic narration of truth, in the form of a story. But in poetry which is the highest form of literature, the difference is much more observable. We find the Latin poets of to-day writing just as freely on the subject of love as the old Latin poets of the age of Augustus, while Northern poets observe with few exceptions great restraint when treating of this theme. Now where is the line to be drawn? Are the Latins right? Are the English right? How are we to make a sharp distinction between what is moral and good and what is immoral and bad in treating love-subjects?

Some definition must be attempted.

What is meant by love? As used by Latin writers the word has a range of meanings, from that of the sexual relation between insects or animals up to the highest form of religious emotion, called "the love of God." I need scarcely say that this definition is too loose for our use. The English word, by general consent, means both sexual passion and deep friendship. This again is a meaning too wide for our purpose. By putting the adjective "true" before love,

some definition is attempted in ordinary conversation. When an Englishman speaks of "true love," he usually means something that has no passion at all; he means a perfect friendship which grows up between man and wife and which has nothing to do with the passion which brought the pair together. But when the English poet speaks of love, he generally means passion, not friendship. I am only stating very general rules. You see how confusing the subject is, how difficult to define the matter. Let us leave the definition alone for a moment, and consider the matter philosophically.

Some very foolish persons have attempted even within recent years to make a classification of different kinds of love—love between the sexes. They talk about romantic love and other such things. All that is utter nonsense. In the meaning of sexual affection there is only one kind of love the natural attraction of one sex for the other; and the only difference in the highest form of this attraction and the lowest is this, that in the nobler nature a vast number of moral, æsthetic, and ethical sentiments are related to the passion, and that in lower natures those sentiments are absent. Therefore we may say that even in the highest forms of the sentiment there is only one dominant feeling, complex though it be, the desire for possession. What follows the possession we may call love if we please; but it might better be called perfect friendship and sympathy. It is altogether a different thing. The love that is the theme of poets in all countries is really love, not the friendship that grows out of it.

I suppose you know that the etymological meaning of "passion" is "a state of suffering." In regard to love, the word has particular signification to the Western mind, for it refers to the time of struggle and doubt and longing before the object is attained. Now how much of this passion is a legitimate subject of literary art?

The difficulty may, I think, be met by remembering the extraordinary character of the mental phenomena which manifest themselves in the time of passion. There is dur-

ing that time a strange illusion, an illusion so wonderful that it has engaged the attention of great philosophers for thousands of years; Plato, you know, tried to explain it in a very famous theory. I mean the illusion that seems to change, or rather, actually does change the senses of a man at a certain time. To his eye a certain face has suddenly become the most beautiful object in the world. To his ears the accents of one voice become the sweetest of all music. Reason has nothing to do with this, and reason has no power against the enchantment. Out of Nature's mystery, somehow or other, this strange magic suddenly illuminates the senses of a man; then vanishes again, as noiselessly as it came. It is a very ghostly thing, and cannot be explained by any theory not of a very ghostly kind. Even Herbert Spencer has devoted his reasoning to a new theory about it. I need not go further in this particular than to tell you that in a certain way passion is now thought to have something to do with other lives than the present; in short, it is a kind of organic memory of relations that existed in thousands and tens of thousands of former states of being. Right or wrong though the theories may be, this mysterious moment of love, the period of this illusion, is properly the subject of high poetry, simply because it is the most beautiful and the most wonderful experience of a human life. And why?

Because in the brief time of such passion the very highest and finest emotions of which human nature is capable are brought into play. In that time more than at any other hour in life do men become unselfish, unselfish at least toward one human being. Not only unselfishness but self-sacrifice is a desire peculiar to the period. The young man in love is not merely willing to give away everything that he possesses to the person beloved; he wishes to suffer pain, to meet danger, to risk his life for her sake. Therefore Tennyson, in speaking of that time, beautifully said:

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out of sight.

Unselfishness is, of course, a very noble feeling, independently of the cause. But this is only one of the emotions of a higher class when powerfully aroused. There is pity, tenderness—the same kind of tenderness that one feels toward a child—the love of the helpless, the desire to protect. And a third sentiment felt at such a time more strongly than at any other, is the sentiment of duty; responsibilities moral and social are then comprehended in a totally new way. Surely none can dispute these facts nor the beauty of them.

Moral sentiments are the highest of all; but next to them the sentiment of beauty in itself, the artistic feeling, is also a very high form of intellectual and even of secondary moral experience. Scientifically there is a relation between the beautiful and the good, between the physically perfect and the ethically perfect. Of course it is not absolute. There is nothing absolute in this world. But the relation exists. Whoever can comprehend the highest form of one kind of beauty must be able to comprehend something of the other. I know very well that the ideal of the love-season is an illusion; in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of the thousand the beauty of the woman is only imagined. But does that make any possible difference? I do not think that it does. To imagine beauty is really to see it—not objectively, perhaps, but subjectively beyond all possibility of doubt. Though you see the beauty only in your mind, in your mind it is; and in your mind its ethical influence must operate. During the time that a man worships even imaginary bodily beauty, he receives some secret glimpse of a higher kind of beauty—beauty of heart and mind. Was there ever in this world a real lover who did not believe the woman of his choice to be not only the most beautiful of mortals, but also the best in a moral sense? I do not think that there ever was.

The moral and the ethical sentiments of a being thus aroused call into sudden action all the finer energies of the man—the capacities for effort, for heroism, for high pressure

work of any sort, mental or physical, for all that requires quickness in thought and exactitude in act. There is for the time being a sense of new power. Anything that makes strong appeal to the best exercise of one's faculties is beneficent and, in most cases, worthy of reverence. Indeed, it is in the short season of which I am speaking that we always discover the best of everything in the character of woman or of man. In that period the evil qualities, the ungenerous side, is usually kept as much out of sight as possible.

Now for all these suggested reasons, as for many others which might be suggested, the period of illusion in love is really the period which poets and writers of romance are naturally justified in describing. Can they go beyond it with safety, with propriety? That depends very much upon whether they go up or down. By going up I mean keeping within the region of moral idealism. By going down I mean descending to the level of merely animal realism. In this realism there is nothing deserving the highest effort of art of any sort.

What is the object of art? Is it not, or should it not be, to make us imagine better conditions than that which at present exist in the world, and by so imagining to prepare the way for the coming of such conditions? I think that all great art has done this. Do you remember the old story about Greek mothers keeping in their rooms the statue of a god or a man, more beautiful than anything real, so that their imagination might be constantly influenced by the sight of beauty, and that they might perhaps be able to bring more beautiful children into the world? Among the Arabs, mothers also do something of this kind, only, as they have no art of imagery, they go to nature herself for the living image. Black luminous eyes are beautiful, and wives keep in their tents a little deer, the gazelle, which is famous for the brilliancy and beauty of its eyes. By constantly looking at this charming pet the Arab wife hopes to bring into the world some day a child with eyes as beautiful

as the eyes of the gazelle. Well, the highest function of art ought to do for us, or at least for the world, what the statue and the gazelle were expected to do for Grecian and Arab mothers—to make possible higher conditions than the existing ones.

So much being said, consider again the place and the meaning of the passion of love in any human life. It is essentially a period of idealism, of imagining better things and conditions than are possible in this world. For everybody who has been in love has imagined something higher than the possible and the present. Any idealism is a proper subject for art. It is not at all the same in the case of realism. Grant that all this passion, imagination, and fine sentiment is based upon a very simple animal impulse. That does not make the least difference in the value of the highest results of that passion. We might say the very same thing about any human emotion; every emotion can be evolutionally traced back to simple and selfish impulses shared by man with the lower animals. But because an apple tree or a pear tree happens to have its roots in the ground, does that mean that its fruits are not beautiful and wholesome? Most assuredly we must not judge the fruit of the tree from the unseen roots; but what about turning up the ground to look at the roots? What becomes of the beauty of the tree when you do that? The realist—at least the French realist—likes to do that. He likes to bring back the attention of his reader to the lowest rather than to the highest, to that which should be kept hidden, for the very same reason that the roots of a tree should be kept underground if the tree is to live.

The time of illusion, then, is the beautiful moment of passion; it represents the artistic zone in which the poet or romance writer ought to be free to do the very best that he can. He may go beyond that zone; but then he has only two directions in which he can travel. Above it there is religion, and an artist may, like Dante, succeed in transforming love into a sentiment of religious ecstasy. I

do not think that any artist could do that to-day; this is not an age of religious ecstasy. But upwards there is no other way to go. Downwards the artist may travel until he finds himself in hell. Between the zone of idealism and the brutality of realism there are no doubt many gradations. I am only indicating what I think to be an absolute truth, that in treating of love the literary master should keep to the period of illusion, and that to go below it is a dangerous undertaking. And now, having tried to make what are believed to be proper distinctions between great literature on this subject and all that is not great, we may begin to study a few examples. I am going to select at random passages from English poets and others, illustrating my meaning.

Tennyson is perhaps the most familiar to you among poets of our own time; and he has given a few exquisite examples of the ideal sentiment in passion. One is a concluding verse in the beautiful song that occurs in the monodrama of "Maud," where the lover, listening in the garden, hears the steps of his beloved approaching.

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthy bed;
My dust would hear her and beat,
Had I lain for a century dead;
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red.

This is a very fine instance of the purely ideal emotion—extravagant, if you like, in the force of the imagery used, but absolutely sincere and true; for the imagination of love is necessarily extravagant. It would be quite useless to ask whether the sound of a girl's footsteps could really waken a dead man; we know that love can fancy such things quite naturally, not in one country only but everywhere. An Arabian poem written long before the time of Mohammed contains exactly the same thought in simpler words;

and I think that there are some old Japanese songs containing something similar. All that the statement really means is that the voice, the look, the touch, even the foot-step of the woman beloved have come to possess for the lover a significance as great as life and death. For the moment he knows no other divinity; she is his god, in the sense that her power over him has become infinite and irresistible.

The second example may be furnished from another part of the same composition—the little song of exaltation after the promise to marry has been given.

O let the solid ground
 Not fail beneath my feet
 Before my life has found
 What some have found so sweet;
 Then let come what come may,
 What matter if I go mad,
 I shall have had my day.

Let the sweet heavens endure,
 Not close and darken above me
 Before I am quite quite sure
 That there is one to love me;
 Then let come what come may
 To a life that has been so sad,
 I shall have had my day.

The feeling of the lover is that no matter what happens afterwards, the winning of the woman is enough to pay for life, death, pain, or anything else. One of the most remarkable phenomena of the illusion is the supreme indifference to consequences—at least to any consequences which would not signify moral shame or loss of honour. Of course the poet is supposed to consider the emotion only in generous natures. But the subject of this splendid indifference has been more wonderfully treated by Victor Hugo than by Tennyson—as we shall see later on, when considering another phase of the emotion. Before doing that, I

want to call your attention to a very charming treatment of love's romance by an American. It is one of the most delicate of modern compositions, and it is likely to become a classic, as it has already been printed in four or five different anthologies. The title is "Atalanta's Race."

First let me tell you the story of Atalanta, so that you will be better able to see the fine symbolism of the poem. Atalanta, the daughter of a Greek king, was not only the most beautiful of maidens, but the swiftest runner in the world. She passed her time in hunting, and did not wish to marry. But as many men wanted to marry her, a law was passed that any one who desired to win her must run a race with her. If he could beat her in running, then she promised to marry him, but if he lost the race, he was to be killed. Some say that the man was allowed to run first, and that the girl followed with a spear in her hand and killed him when she overtook him. There are different accounts of the contest. Many suitors lost the race and were killed. But finally a young man called Hippomenes obtained from the Goddess of Love three golden apples, and he was told that if he dropped these apples while running, the girl would stop to pick them up, and that in this way he might be able to win the race. So he ran, and when he found himself about to be beaten, he dropped one apple. She stopped to pick it up and thus he gained a little. In this way he won the race and married Atalanta. Greek mythology says that afterwards she and her husband were turned into lions because they offended the gods; however, that need not concern us here. There is a very beautiful moral in the old Greek story, and the merit of the American composition is that its author, Maurice Thompson, perceived this moral and used it to illustrate a great philosophical truth.

When Spring grows old, and sleepy winds
Set from the South with odors sweet,
I see my love, in green, cool groves,
Speed down dusk aisles on shining feet.

She throws a kiss and bids me run,
In whispers sweet as roses' breath;
I know I cannot win the race,
And at the end, I know, is death.

But joyfully I bare my limbs,
Anoint me with the tropic breeze,
And feel through every sinew run
The vigour of Hippomenes.

O race of love! we all have run
Thy happy course through groves of Spring,
And cared not, when at last we lost,
For life or death, or anything!

There are a few thoughts here requiring a little comment. You know that the Greek games and athletic contests were held in the fairest season, and that the contestants were stripped. They were also anointed with oil, partly to protect the skin against sun and temperature and partly to make the body more supple. The poet speaks of the young man as being anointed by the warm wind of Spring, the tropic season of life. It is a very pretty fancy. What he is really telling us is this:

“There are no more Greek games, but the race of love is still run to-day as in times gone by; youth is the season, and the atmosphere of youth is the anointing of the contestant.”

But the moral of the piece is its great charm, the poetical statement of a beautiful and a wonderful fact. In almost every life there is a time when we care for only one person, and suffer much for that person's sake; yet in that period we do not care whether we suffer or die, and in after life, when we look back at those hours of youth, we wonder at the way in which we then felt. In European life of to-day the old Greek fable is still true; almost everybody must run Atalanta's race and abide by the result.

One of the delightful phases of the illusion of love is the sense of old acquaintance, the feeling as if the person

loved had been known and loved long ago in some time and place forgotten. I think you must have observed, many of you, that when the senses of sight and hearing happen to be strongly stirred by some new and most pleasurable experience, the feeling of novelty is absent, or almost absent. You do not feel as if you were seeing or hearing something new, but as if you saw or heard something that you knew all about very long ago. I remember once travelling with a Japanese boy into a charming little country town in Shikoku—and scarcely had we entered the main street, than he cried out: “Oh, I have seen this place before!” Of course he had not seen it before; he was from Osaka and had never left the great city until then. But the pleasure of his new experience had given him this feeling of familiarity with the unfamiliar. I do not pretend to explain this familiarity with the new—it is a great mystery still, just as it was a great mystery to the Roman Cicero. But almost everybody that has been in love has probably had the same feeling during a moment or two—the feeling “I have known that woman before,” though the where and the when are mysteries. Some of the modern poets have beautifully treated this feeling. The best example that I can give you is the exquisite lyric by Rossetti entitled “Sudden Light.”

I have been here before,
 But when or how I cannot tell:
 I know the grass beyond the door,
 The sweet keen smell,
 The sighing sound, the lights around the shore.

You have been mine before,—
 How long ago I may not know:
 But just when at that swallow's soar
 Your neck turned so,
 Some veil did fall,—I knew it all of yore.

Has this been thus before?
 And shall not thus time's eddying flight

Still with our lives our loves restore
 In death's despite,
 And day and night yield one delight once more?

I think you will acknowledge that this is very pretty; and the same poet has treated the idea equally well in other poems of a more complicated kind. But another poet of the period was haunted even more than Rossetti by this idea—Arthur O'Shaughnessy. Like Rossetti he was a great lover, and very unfortunate in his love; and he wrote his poems, now famous, out of the pain and regret that was in his heart, much as singing birds born in cages are said to sing better when their eyes are put out. Here is one example:

Along the garden ways just now
 I heard the flowers speak;
 The white rose told me of your brow,
 The red rose of your cheek;
 The lily of your bended head,
 The bindweed of your hair:
 Each look'd its loveliest and said
 You were more fair.

I went into the wood anon,
 And heard the wild birds sing,
 How sweet you were; they warbled on,
 Piped, trill'd the self-same thing.
 Thrush, blackbird, linnnet, without pause,
 The burden did repeat,
 And still began again because
 You were more sweet.

And then I went down to the sea,
 And heard it murmuring too,
 Part of an ancient mystery,
 All made of me and you:
 How many a thousand years ago
 I loved, and you were sweet—
 Longer I could not stay, and so
 I fled back to your feet.

The last stanza especially expresses the idea that I have been telling you about; but in a poem entitled "Greater Memory" the idea is much more fully expressed. By "greater memory" you must understand the memory beyond this life into past stages of existence. This piece has become a part of the nineteenth century poetry that will live; and a few of the best stanzas deserve to be quoted.

In the heart there lay buried for years
 Love's story of passion and tears;
 Of the heaven that two had begun,
 And the horror that tore them apart;
 When one was love's slayer, but one
 Made a grave for the love in his heart.

The long years pass'd weary and lone,
 And it lay there and changed there unknown;
 Then one day from its innermost place,
 In the shamed and ruin'd love's stead,
 Love arose with a glorified face,
 Like an angel that comes from the dead.

It uplifted the stone that was set
 On that tomb which the heart held yet;
 But the sorrow had moulder'd within,
 And there came from the long closed door
 A clear image, that was not the sin
 Or the grief that lay buried before.

There was never the stain of a tear
 On the face that was ever so dear;
 'Twas the same in each lovelier way;
 'Twas old love's holier part,
 And the dream of the earliest day
 Brought back to the desolate heart.

It was knowledge of all that had been
 In the thought, in the soul unseen;
 'Twas the word which the lips could not say
 To redeem or recover the past;
 It was more than was taken away
 Which the heart got back at the last

The passion that lost its spell,
The rose that died where it fell,
The look that was look'd in vain,
 The prayer that seem'd lost evermore,
They were found in the heart again,
 With all that the heart would restore.

Put into less mystical language the legend is this: A young man and a young woman loved each other for a time; then they were separated by some great wrong—we may suppose the woman was untrue. The man always loved her memory, in spite of this wrong which she had done. The two died and were buried; hundreds and hundreds of years they remained buried, and the dust of them mixed with the dust of the earth. But in the perpetual order of things, a pure love never can die, though bodies may die and pass away. So after many generations the pure love which this man had for a bad woman was born again in the heart of another man—the same, yet not the same. And the spirit of the woman that long ago had done the wrong, also found incarnation again; and the two, meeting, are drawn to each other by what people call love, but what is really Greater Memory, the recollection of past lives. But now all is happiness for them, because the weaker and worse part of each has really died and has been left hundreds of years behind, and only the higher nature has been born again. All that ought not to have been is not; but all that ought to be now is. This is really an evolutionary teaching, but it is also poetical license, for the immoral side of mankind does not by any means die so quickly as the poet supposes. It is perhaps a question of many tens of thousands of years to get rid of a few of our simpler faults. Anyway, the fancy charms us and tempts us really to hope that these things might be so.

While the poets of our time so extend the history of a love backwards beyond this life, we might expect them to do the very same thing in the other direction. I do not refer to reunion in heaven, or anything of that sort, but

simply to affection continued after death. There are some very pretty fancies of the kind. But they cannot prove to you quite so interesting as the poems which treat the recollection of past life. When we consider the past imaginatively, we have some ground to stand on. The past has been—there is no doubt about that. The fact that we are at this moment alive makes it seem sufficiently true that we were alive thousands or millions of years ago. But when we turn to the future for poetical inspiration, the case is very different. There we must imagine without having anything to stand upon in the way of experience. Of course if born again into a body we could imagine many things; but there is the ghostly interval between death and birth which nobody is able to tell us about. Here the poet depends upon dream experiences, and it is of such an experience that Christina Rossetti speaks in her beautiful poem entitled “A Pause.”

They made the chamber sweet with flowers and leaves,
 And the bed sweet with flowers on which I lay;
 While my soul, love-bound, loiter'd on its way.
 I did not hear the birds about the eaves,
 Nor hear the reapers talk among the sheaves:
 Only my soul kept watch from day to day,
 My thirsty soul kept watch for one away:—
 Perhaps he loves, I thought, remembers, grieves.

At length there came the step upon the stair,
 Upon the lock the old familiar hand:
 Then first my spirit seem'd to scent the air
 Of Paradise; then first the tardy sand
 Of time ran golden; and I felt my hair
 Put on a glory, and my soul expand.

The woman is dead. In the room where her body died, flowers have been placed, offerings to the dead. Also there are flowers upon the bed. The ghost of the woman observes all this, but she does not feel either glad or sad because of it; she is thinking only of the living lover, who

was not there when she died, but far away. She wants to know whether he really loved her, whether he will really be sorry to hear that she is dead. Outside the room of death the birds are singing; in the fields beyond the windows peasants are working, and talking as they work. But the ghost does not listen to these sounds. The ghost remains in the room only for love's sake; she cannot go away until the lover comes. At last she hears him coming. She knows the sound of the step; she knows the touch of the hand upon the lock of the door. And instantly, before she sees him at all, she first feels delight. Already it seems to her that she can smell the perfume of the flowers of heaven; it then seems to her that about her head, as about the head of an angel, a circle of glory is shaping itself, and the real heaven, the Heaven of Love, is at hand.

How very beautiful this is! There is still one line which requires a separate explanation—I mean the sentence about “the sands of time running golden.” Perhaps you may remember the same simile in Tennyson's “Locksley Hall:”

Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his glowing hands;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Here time is identified with the sand of the hour glass, and the verb “to run” is used because this verb commonly expresses the trickling of the sand from the upper part of the glass into the lower. In other words, fine sand “runs” just like water. To say that the “sands of time run golden,” or become changed into gold, is only a poetical way of stating that the time becomes more than happy—almost heavenly or divine. And now you will see how very beautiful the comparison becomes in this little poem about the ghost of the woman waiting for the coming step of her lover.

Several other aspects of the emotion may now be considered separately. One of these, an especially beautiful one, is memory. Of course, there are many aspects of love's memories, some all happiness, others intensely sor-

rowful—the memory of a walk, a meeting, a moment of good-bye. Such memories occupy a very large place in the treasure house of English love poems. I am going to give three examples only, but each of a different kind. The first poet that I am going to mention is Coventry Patmore. He wrote two curious books of poetry, respectively called “The Angel in the House” and “The Unknown Eros.” In the first of these books he wrote the whole history of his courtship and marriage—a very dangerous thing for a poet to do, but he did it successfully. The second volume is miscellaneous, and contains some very beautiful things. I am going to quote only a few lines from the piece called “Amelia.” This piece is the story of an evening spent with a sweetheart, and the lines which I am quoting refer to the moment of taking the girl home. They are now rather famous:

. . . To the dim street
I led her sacred feet;
And so the Daughter gave,
Soft, moth-like, sweet,
Showy as damask-rose and shy as musk,
Back to her Mother, anxious in the dusk.
And now ‘Good-night!’

Why should the poet speak of the girl in this way? Why does he call her feet sacred? She has just promised to marry him; and now she seems to him quite divine. But he discovers very plain words with which to communicate his finer feelings to the reader. The street is “dim” because it is night; and in the night the beautifully dressed maiden seems like a splendid moth—the name given to night butterflies in England. In England the moths are much more beautiful than the true butterflies; they have wings of scarlet and purple and brown and gold. So the comparison, though peculiarly English, is very fine. Also there is a suggestion of the soundlessness of the moth’s flight. Now “showy as damask-rose” is a striking simile only because

the damask-rose is a wonderfully splendid flower—richest in colour of all roses in English gardens. “Shy as musk” is rather a daring simile. “Musk” is a perfume used by English as well as Japanese ladies, but there is no perfume which must be used with more discretion, carefulness. If you use ever so little too much, the effect is not pleasant. But if you use exactly the proper quantity, and no more, there is no perfume which is more lovely. “Shy as musk” thus refers to that kind of girlish modesty which never commits a fault even by the measure of a grain—a beautiful shyness incapable of being anything but beautiful. Nevertheless the comparison must be confessed one which should be felt rather than explained.

The second of the three promised quotations shall be from Robert Browning. There is one feeling, not often touched upon by poets, yet peculiar to lovers, that is here treated—the desire when you are very happy or when you are looking at anything attractive to share the pleasure of the moment with the beloved. But it seldom happens that the wish and the conditions really meet. Referring to this longing Browning made a short lyric that is now a classic; it is among the most dainty things of the century.

Never the time and the place
And the loved one all together!
This path—how soft to pace!
This May—what magic weather!
Where is the loved one's face?
In a dream that loved one's face meets mine,
But the house is narrow, the place is bleak
Where, outside, rain and wind combine
With a furtive ear, if I try to speak,
With a hostile eye at my flushing cheek,
With a malice that marks each word, each sign!

Never can we have things the way we wish in this world—a beautiful day, a beautiful place, and the presence of the beloved all at the same time. Something is always

missing; if the place be beautiful, the weather perhaps is bad. Or if the weather and the place both happen to be perfect, the woman is absent. So the poet finding himself in some very beautiful place, and remembering this, remembers also the last time that he met the woman beloved. It was a small dark house and chilly; outside there was rain and storm; and the sounds of the wind and of the rain were as the sounds of people secretly listening, or sounds of people trying to look in secretly through the windows. Evidently it was necessary that the meeting should be secret, and it was not altogether as happy as could have been wished.

The third example is a very beautiful poem; we must content ourselves with an extract from it. It is the memory of a betrothal day, and the poet is Frederick Tennyson. I suppose you know that there were three Tennysons, and although Alfred happened to be the greatest, all of them were good poets.

It is a golden morning of the spring,
 My cheek is pale, and hers is warm with bloom,
 And we are left in that old carven room,
 And she begins to sing;

The open casement quivers in the breeze,
 And one large muskrose leans its dewy grace
 Into the chamber, like a happy face,
 And round it swim the bees.

.

I know not what I said; what she replied
 Lives, like eternal sunshine, in my heart;
 And then I murmur'd, Oh! we never part,
 My love, my life, my bride!

And silence o'er us, after that great bliss,
 Fell, like a welcome shadow; and I heard
 The far woods sighing, and a summer bird
 Singing amid the trees;

The sweet bird's happy song, that stream'd around,
The murmur of the woods, the azure skies,
Were graven on my heart, though ears and eyes
Mark'd neither sight nor sound.

She sleeps in peace beneath the chancel stone,
But ah! so clearly is the vision seen,
The dead seem raised, or Death hath never been,
Were I not here alone.

This is great art in its power of picturing a memory of the heart. Let us notice some of the beauties. The lover is pale because he is afraid, anxious; he is going to ask a question and he does not know how she may answer him. All this was long ago, years and years ago, but the strong emotions of that morning leave their every detail painted in remembrance, with strange vividness. After all those years the man still recollects the appearance of the room, the sunshine entering, and the crimson rose looking into the room from the garden, with bees humming round it. Then after the question had been asked and happily answered, neither could speak for joy; and because of the silence all the sounds of nature outside became almost painfully distinct. Now he remembers how he heard in that room the sound of the wind in far away trees, the singing of a bird—he also remembers all the colours and the lights of the day. But it was very, very long ago, and she is dead. Still, the memory is so clear and bright in his heart that it is as if time had stood still, or as if she had come back from the grave. Only one thing assures him that it is but a memory—he is alone.

Returning now to the subject of love's illusion in itself, let me remind you that the illusion does not always pass away—not at all. It passes away in every case of happy union, when it has become no longer necessary to the great purposes of nature. But in case of disappointment, loss, failure to win the maiden desired, it often happens that the ideal image never fades away, but persistently haunts the

mind through life, and is capable thus of making even the most successful life unhappy. Sometimes the result of such disappointment may be to change all a man's ideas about the world, about life, about religion; and everything remains darkened for him. Many a young person disappointed in love begins to lose religious feeling from that moment, for it seems to him, simply because he happens to be unfortunate, that the universe is all wrong. On the other hand the successful lover thinks that the universe is all right; he utters his thanks to the gods, and feels his faith in religion and human nature greater than before. I do not at this moment remember any striking English poem illustrating this fact; but there is a pretty little poem in French by Victor Hugo showing well the relation between successful love and religious feeling in simple minds. Here is an English translation of it. The subject is simply a walk at night, the girl-bride leaning upon the arm of her husband; and his memory of the evening is thus expressed:

The trembling arm I pressed
 Fondly; our thoughts confessed
 Love's conquest tender;
 God filled the vast sweet night,
 Love filled our hearts; the light
 Of stars made splendour.

Even as we walked and dreamed,
 'Twixt heaven and earth, it seemed
 Our souls were speaking;
 The stars looked on thy face;
 Thine eyes through violet space
 The stars were seeking.

And from the astral light
 Feeling the soft sweet night
 Thrill to thy soul,
 Thou saidst: 'O God of Bliss
 Lord of the Blue Abyss,
 Thou madest the whole!'

And the stars whispered low
To the God of Space, 'We know,
God of Eternity,
Dear Lord, all Love is Thine,
Even by Love's Light we shine!
Thou madest Beauty!'

Of course here the religious feeling itself is part of the illusion, but it serves to give great depth and beauty to simple feeling. Besides, the poem illustrates one truth very forcibly—namely, that when we are perfectly happy all the universe appears to be divine and divinely beautiful; in other words, we are in heaven. On the contrary, when we are very unhappy the universe appears to be a kind of hell, in which there is no hope, no joy, and no gods to pray to.

But the special reason I wished to call attention to Victor Hugo's lyric is that it has that particular quality called by philosophical critics "cosmic emotion." Cosmic emotion means the highest quality of human emotion. The word "cosmos" signifies the universe—not simply this world, but all the hundred millions of suns and worlds in the known heaven. And the adjective "cosmic," means, of course, "related to the whole universe." Ordinary emotion may be more than individual in its relations. I mean that your feelings may be moved by the thought or the perception of something relating not only to your own life but also to the lives of many others. The largest form of such ordinary emotion is what would be called national feeling, the feeling of your own relation to the whole nation or the whole race. But there is higher emotion even than that. When you think of yourself emotionally not only in relation to your own country, your own nation, but in relation to all humanity, then you have a cosmic emotion of the third or second order. I say "third or second," because whether the emotion be second or third rate depends very much upon your conception of humanity as One. But if you think of yourself in relation not to this world only but to the whole universe of hundreds of millions of stars and

planets—in relation to the whole mystery of existence—then you have a cosmic emotion of the highest order. Of course there are degrees even in this; the philosopher or the metaphysician will probably have a finer quality of cosmic emotion than the poet or the artist is able to have. But lovers very often, according to their degree of intellectual culture, experience a kind of cosmic emotion; and Victor Hugo's little poem illustrates this. Night and the stars and the abyss of the sky all seems to be thrilling with love and beauty to the lover's eyes, because he himself is in a state of loving happiness; and then he begins to think about his relation to the universal life, to the supreme mystery beyond all Form and Name.

A third or fourth class of such emotion may be illustrated by the beautiful sonnet of Keats, written not long before his death. Only a very young man could have written this, because only a very young man loves in this way—but how delightful it is! It has no title.

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art—
 Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
 And watching, with eternal lids apart,
 Like Nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
 The moving waters at their priestlike task
 Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
 Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
 Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
 No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
 Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
 To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
 Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
 Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
 And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

Tennyson has charmingly represented a lover wishing that he were a necklace of his beloved, or her girdle, or her ear-ring; but that is not a cosmic emotion at all. Indeed, the idea of Tennyson's pretty song was taken from old

French and English love songs of the peasants—popular ballads. But in this beautiful sonnet of Keats, where the lover wishes to be endowed with the immortality and likeness of a star only to be for ever with the beloved, there is something of the old Greek thought which inspired the beautiful lines written between two and three thousand years ago, and translated by J. A. Symonds :

Gazing on stars, my Star?—
Would that I were the welkin,
Starry with myriad eyes, ever to gaze upon Thee!

But there is more than the Greek beauty of thought in Keats's sonnet, for we find the poet speaking of the exterior universe in the largest relation, thinking of the stars watching for ever the rising and the falling of the sea tides, thinking of the sea tides themselves as continually purifying the world, even as a priest purifies a temple. The fancy of the boy expands to the fancy of philosophy; it is a blending of poetry, philosophy, and sincere emotion.

You will have seen by the examples which we have been reading together that English love poetry, like Japanese love poetry, may be divided into many branches and classified according to the range of subject from the very simplest utterance of feeling up to that highest class expressing cosmic emotion. Very rich the subject is; the student is only puzzled where to choose. I should again suggest to you to observe the value of the theme of illusion, especially as illustrated in our examples. There are indeed multitudes of Western love poems that would probably appear to you very strange, perhaps very foolish. But you will certainly acknowledge that there are some varieties of English love poetry which are neither strange nor foolish, and which are well worth studying, not only in themselves but in their relation to the higher forms of emotional expression in all literature. Out of love poetry belonging to the highest class, much can be drawn that would serve to enrich and to give a new colour to your own literature of emotion.