COMPLETE LECTURES

ON POETRY

By

LAFCADIO HEARN

Edited by

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and

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LAFCADIO HEARN LIBRARY, TOYAMA KOTO GAKKO

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KANDA TOKYO

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PREFACE

WHILE occupying the chair of English Literature in the Imperial University of Tokyo from 1896 (*September*) to 1903 (*March*), Lafcadio Hearn divided his lectures into three main divisions. Five hours a week were devoted to textual readings from poetical works such as those of Tennyson or Rossetti; three hours were allotted to a series of lectures on the history of English Literature, each of which covered three successive academic years; for the remaining four hours a week, he lectured on miscellaneous themes in literature.

It is the whole of the lectures, belonging to this last category, which are contained in the three volumes, of which the third is now offered to the public. Lafcadio Hearn's lectures on English literature compiled by the present editors has already made its appearance in 1927 under the title of "A History of English Literature" (*The Hokuseido Press*).

In 1915 and the two following years, on the advice of Pay Director Mitchell McDonald, U. S. N., Prof. Erskine had published the greater part of Hearn's lectures in four volumes with his own very illuminating prefaces. These lectures were selected from typewritten MSS. based on the notes taken in class by Messrs. M. Otani, R. Tanabé, S. Ibaraki, S. Uchigasaki, M. Kurihara, S. Kobinata, R. Ishikawa, J. Kishi, and T. Ochiai, all of whom were students of Hearn. Some of these typewritten MSS. which were left unused in the possession of the Hearn family, have been entrusted to the Hokuseido Press, and are now for the first time published in the present volumes, thus making the latter a complete collection.

The lectures in these volumes are not arranged according to the chronological order of their delivery, but grouped

according to the nature of their subject-matter. Fifteen lectures in this volume are published here for the first time.

It is most important to mention in this connection, that the editors have been extremely fortunate in securing the help and assistance of Prof. Nishizaki of the Toyama Kōtō Gakko. To him they are deeply indebted for his painstaking revision of the texts quoted, for his reference to those books of which Hearn made use when lecturing, and which are now, together with all the other books Lafcadio Hearn possessed, in the Hearn Library, belonging to the same school. It is as the result of Prof. Nishizaki's labours that the editors feel confidence in the authenticity and exactitude of their compilation. Already so much has been said of the merits of the lectures that any further addition by us, as editors, would be superfluous. One thing, however, deserves special notice and that is that these lectures were Lafcadio Hearn's intimate talks. Had he lived to see their publication, he would certainly have rewritten them many times and never permitted them to see the light of day in their present form.

In dictating Hearn gave the punctuation, and sometimes even the spelling of unfamiliar names, so that we, his students, could take down his lectures word for word. He lectured *extempore*, not from any fully prepared notes. He brought with him a tiny memorandum containing only names and dates, and a few volumes of poetical works or anthologies wrapped in a purple *furoshiki*. Untying this, and placing the contents carelessly upon his desk before him, he would slowly begin dictating. When quoting any lines or verses, he used to refer to these books, bringing his right eye very close to the pages, and if the line-arrangement of a stanza chanced to be irregular, he would show the irregularity on the black-board. Being exceptionally skilful at drawing, he used to make sketches on the board, should a description of anything exotic or unfamiliar to us occur in quotations. Sometimes a faint, shy smile would lighten up his face when he seemed satisfied with

the effect of his drawing. Apart from this, the lecture went on uninterruptedly. Like the music of running waters the sentences flowed from his lips. We, his students, listened eagerly, busily taking down his words. Gradually the subject under discussion held us enthralled. . Lafcadio Hearn took into account the mentality of his students and entered into it himself. His incomparable power of paraphrasing clarified passages difficult for us to understand, revealing often to us hidden conceptious and unsuspected charms. It often seemed to us as if we were actually leaning out from the bar of Heaven beside the Blessed Damozel, or walking along the corridors of the Palace of Art, till the bell for the recess broke the spell.

The memory of those days has been ever present with us in our work of editing these lectures. Now that they are going to be given to the public, we feel how much we owe Mrs. Hearn, whose affectionate devotion gave to our beloved master a haven of rest after his *wanderjahre*, and who, after surviving her husband twenty-eight years, passed away on February 18th, 1932. Nor can we forget Pay Director Mitchell McDonald, U. S. N., and Mrs. Wetmore, the latter the biographer of Hearn, both of whom were his lifelong and dearest friends and who always encouraged us in doing what we could perpetuate our master's memory.

R. TANABE
T. OCHIAI

Tokyo, September, 1934.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

ON THE COMPLETE LAFCADIO HEARN LECTURES

It is with a great pleasure that I am able to announce the publication on September 26th, 1934, the very day of the thirtieth anniversary of the death of the great interpreter of Japan, of two volumes of Lafcadio Hearn's lectures "On Poets" and "On Poetry", thereby bringing the issue of the Complete Lafcadio Hearn Lectures to a conclusion. It is nine years since the publication of the Lectures was first undertaken, and seven years since "A History of English Literature" was brought out, followed by the publication in 1932 of the lectures "On Art, Literature and Philosophy."

I am recalling to my mind as vividly as if it were yesterday how in 1922 just about a year prior to the Great Earthquake and Fire which devastated Tokyo and Yokohama, Mr. Mitchell McDonald, life-long friend of Hearn and his literary executor, in his room on the second floor of the Grand Hotel, Yokohama, spoke to me, with tears in his eyes, and firmly grasping my hands in his, said:

"It is already twenty years since my dearest friend Hearn died. I am now seventy and cannot hope for many more years to live, but you are still a young man and have a great work ahead to do in publishing the works of Hearn. Lafcadio often told me to take good care of my health, and now I must tell you to do the same thing, especially because you are undertaking a great work. Your work will greatly delight me and the spirit of Hearn whose remains lie buried at the Zoshigaya Cemetry."

A year later Mr. McDonald was killed in the Great Earthquake and Fire, which also brought my business almost to ruin. However, with the words of Mr. McDonald ringing in my ears, I started at once to re-establish my ruined plants and business. You can imagine how pleased I am at the completion of the work, and with what a profound pleasure and gratification I am dedicating the four volumes of Hearn's Lectures to the spirits of Hearn and McDonald.

After Hearn's death, Mr. McDonald regretted for long that his lectures delivered at the Tokyo Imperial University, masterpieces of delivery and fine pieces of literary criticism in themselves, should remain unpublished, and entrusted part of the lecture notes taken in class by Hearn's

pupils, including those of the editors of the present volumes, to Professor Erskine, of Columbia University, New York, for publication. The result was Hearn's "Interpretation of Literature" in two volumes, "Appreciation of Poetry" and "Life and Literature" edited by Professor Erskine and published by Dodd, Mead and Co., New York. These four volumes representing the able craftsmanship of Professor Erskine as the editor, justly remained for long as the standard edition of Hearn's lectures. Among the pupils and admirers of Hearn, however, there was an irresistible craving for Hearn's lectures in complete form, including everything that was delivered by their beloved master and in its original form. That is why the editors of the present volumes and the publisher proceeded to undertake the issue of the Complete Lafcadio Hearn Lectures.

Recourse was made to the notes taken in class by Professor R. Tanabé and Professor T. Ochiai, two of the former pupils of Hearn who re-read and compared their notes again and again, and reference was made by Professor Nishizaki of the Lafcadio Hearn Library, Toyama Kōtō Gakko, to the books Hearn possessed and used in Japan, by way of verification of the lecturer's statements and correction of the notes,—a laborious research in itself. We are now satisfied that the volumes in the present form, containing all the lectures delivered by Hearn at the Imperial University of Tokyo in the period extending from 1896 to 1903, represent his lectures as they were delivered by the master.

As to the third revised edition of "A History of English Literature", which also forms a volume of the series, it may be added that it represents the editorial work of Professor Tanabé and Professor Ochiai, with emendations by Professor Nishizaki, of the Hearn Library, and Professor A. Stanton Whitfield, B. Litt. Oxon., F. R. Hist. Soc., B. Sc., formerly of the Tokyo Imperial University.

September 26, 1934.

YOSHITAKA NAKATSUCHI
THE HOKUSEIDO PRESS, TOKYO.

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CHAPTER I

NAKED POETRY

BEFORE beginning the regular course of literary lectures this year, I want to make a little discourse about what we may call Naked Poetry,—that is, poetry without any dress, without any ornament, the very essence or body of poetry unveiled by artifice of any kind. I use the word artistically, of course — comparing poetry to an artistic object representing either a figure or a fact in itself, without any accessories.

Now for a few words about poetry in general. All the myriad forms of verse can be classed in three divisions, without respect to subject or method. The highest class is the poetry in which both the words, or form, and the emotion expressed are equally admirable and super-excellent. The second division in importance is that kind of poetry in which the emotion or sentiment is the chief thing, and the form is only a secondary consideration. The third and least important class of poetry is that in which the form is everything, and the emotion or sentiment is always subordinated to it. Now scarcely any modern poem of great length entirely fulfils the highest condition. We have to go back to the old Greek poetry to find such fulfilment. But the second class of poetry includes such wonderful work as the poetry of Shakespeare. The third class of poetry is very fairly represented in English literature by the work of Pope and the dead classic school. To-day — I mean at this moment in England — the tendency is bad: it is again setting in the direction of form rather than of sentiment or thought.

This will be sufficient to explain to you what I shall

mean in future lectures by speaking of perfect poetry, or second class poetry, or inferior poetry, independently of other qualifications. But I must also ask you to accept my definition of the word poetry — though it is somewhat arbitrary. By poetry, true poetry, I mean, above all, that kind of composition in verse which deeply stirs the mind and moves the heart — in another word, the poetry of feeling. This is the true literary signification of poetry; and this is why you will hear some kinds of prose spoken of as great poetry, although it is not in any way like verse; an important difference of the kind above referred to has been recognized, I am told, by Japanese poets.

They have, at all events, declared that a perfect poem should leave something in the mind, — something not said, but suggested, — something that makes a thrill in you after reading the composition. You will therefore be very well able to see the beauty of any foreign verses which can fulfil this condition with very simple words. Of course, when academic language, learned words, words known only to Greek or Latin scholars are used, such poetry is almost out of the question. Popular language, in English at least, is the best medium for emotional poetry of certain kinds. But even without going to dialect, or descending to colloquialisms, great effects can be produced with very plain common English — provided that the poet sincerely feels. Here is a tiny but very famous little verse, which I would call an example of naked poetry—pure poetry without any kind of ornament at all. It has only rhymes of one syllable; but even if it had no rhymes at all it would still be a great poetry. And what is more, I should call it something very much resembling in quality the spirit of Japanese poetry. However, you can judge for yourselves: —

FOUR DUCKS ON A POND

Four ducks on a pond,
A grass-bank beyond,
A blue sky of spring,

White clouds on the wing;
What a little thing
To remember for years—
To remember with tears!

It reads like nothing in particular until you get to the last line; — then the whole picture comes suddenly into your mind with a shock, and you understand. It is an exile's memory of home, one instant of childhood shining out in memory, after all the rest of memory has become dark. So it is very famous, and really wonderful — although there is no art in it at all. It is simple as a song.

Now English poetry contains very few inspirations like that—which, by the way, was the work of an Irishman, William Allingham. The remarkable thing about it is the effect made by so small a thing. But we have a few English poets who touched the art of divine simplicity,—of pure emotion independent of form; and one of these was Kingsley. You know several of his songs which show this emotional power; but I am not sure whether you know "Airly Beacon."

"Airly Beacon" is a little song; but it is the story of the tragedy of life—you never can forget it after once reading it. And you have no idea what you are reading until you come to the last line. I must tell you that the place for "Airly Beacon" is a high place in Scotland, — from the top of which a beautiful view can be obtained, — and it is called Airly Beacon, because in ancient times a signal-fire or beacon-fire used to be lighted upon it. Bearing this in mind you will be better able to judge the effect of the poem. I must also remind you that in England and America young girls are allowed a great deal of liberty in regard to what is called "courting," that is to say, being wooed, or made love to under promise of marriage. The idea is that a girl should have sufficient force of will to be able to take care of herself when alone with a man. If she has not—then she might have to sing the song of Airly Beacon. But perhaps the girl in this case was not so unfortunate;

we may imagine that she became a wife and very early a widow. The song does not say.

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;
  Oh the pleasant sight to see
Shires and towns from Airly Beacon,
  While my love climbed up to me!

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;
  Oh the happy hours we lay
Deep in fern on Airly Beacon,
  Courting through the summer's day!

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;
  Oh the weary haunt for me,
All alone on Airly Beacon,
  With his baby on my knee!

The great test as to whether verse contains real poetry, emotional poetry, is this: — can it be translated into the prose of another language and still make an appeal to emotion? If it can, then the true poetry is there. If it cannot, then it is not poetry, but only verse. Now a great deal of famous Western poetry will really bear this test. The little poem that I have just quoted to you will bear it. So will some of the best work of each of our greatest poets. Those of you who studied German know something about the wonderful poems of Heine. You know they are very simple in form and musical. Well, the best foreign translation of them is a translation into French prose. Here, of course, the rhyme is gone, the music is gone, but the real essence of poetry — the power to touch the heart — remains. Do you remember the little poem in which the poet describes the soldier, the sentry on guard at the city-gate? He sees the soldier standing in the light of the evening sun, performing the military exercise all by himself, just to pass the time. He shoulders his gun as if in receiving invisible orders, presents, takes aim. Then the poet suddenly exclaims, "I wish he would shoot me dead!"

The whole power of the little composition is in that exclamation: it tells us all that he means, and all that he feels. To a person unhappy, profoundly unhappy, even the most common sights and sounds of life give him thoughts and wishes in relation to death. Now a little poem like that loses scarcely anything by literary translation: it is what I have called naked poetry;—it does not depend upon the ornaments of expression, or the decoration of rhyme, in order to produce its effect. Perhaps you will say that this essence of poetry may also be found occasionally in prose. That is true;—there is such a thing as poetry in prose, but it is also true that measure and rhyme greatly intensify the charm of emotional expression.

Suppose we now take something more elaborate for an example—this celebrated little poem written many years ago by an Oxford student, and now known everywhere. I call it more elaborate only because the workmanship as to form is much more delicate:

The night has a thousand eyes,
  And the day but one;
Yet the light of the whole world dies
  With the dying sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,
  And the heart but one;
Yet the light of a whole life dies
  When love is done!

—*Francis Bourdillon.*

An ancient Greek might have written something like that; it has the absolute perfection of some of those immortal little pieces preserved to us in the Greek Anthology — two thousand and even three thousand years old. The comparison of stars to eyes is very old: in every Western literature the stars have been called the eyes of the night; and we still speak of the sun as the Eye of Day — just as the Greeks did. Innumerable as are the stars of the night, they

cannot be seen at all when the sun has well risen. They are not able to make light and joy in the world; and when the sun sets, everything becomes dark and colourless for us. Then the poet says that human love is to human life what the sun is to the world. It is not by reason, but by feeling that we are made happy. The mind cannot make us happy as the heart can. Yet the mind, like the sky, "has a thousand eyes" — that is to say, a thousand different capacities of knowledge and perception. It does not matter. When the person that we love is dead the happiness of life ceases for us; emotionally our world becomes dark, as the physical world becomes when the sun has set.

Certainly the perfect verse and rhyme help the effect; but they are not at all necessary to the beauty of the thing. Translate that into your own language in prose; and you will see that very little is lost; for the first two lines of the first stanza exactly balance the first two lines of the second stanza; and the second two lines of the first stanza exactly balance the second two lines of the second stanza. Therefore even in prose the composition must assume a charming form, no matter in what language it is rendered.

But it does not follow at all that because a short composition in verse contains a great deal of meaning or happens to be very cleverly constructed, you can call it a real poem. Verses that only surprise by cleverness, by tricks, by good words, have a very little value. They may be pretty; they may give you the kind of pleasure that a small graceful object gives; but if they do not touch the heart as well as the head, I should never call them real poetry. For example, there is a little French verse which has been translated into English more than a thousand times — always differently, and yet never successfully. *The English Journal of Education* of this year asked for translations of it, and more than five hundred were sent in. None of them were satisfactory, though some were very clever. Here is the little verse:

La vie est vaine:
Un peu d'amour,
Un peu de haine,
Et puis—bonjour!

La vie est brève:
Un peu d'espoir,
Un peu de rêve,
Et puis—bonsoir!

Meaning "Life is vain:
A little love,
A little hate,
And then—good-bye!

Life is brief:
A little hope,
A little dreaming,
And then—good-night!"

Of course this requires no explanation. The French word is astonishingly clear, simple as it looks: the same thing cannot be done in the English tongue quite so well. As I have told you, at least a thousand English writers have tried to render it into English verse; so you see that it is very famous. But is it poetry? I should certainly say that it is not. It is not poetry, because it consists only of a few commonplaces stated in a mocking way — in the tone of a clever man trifling with a serious subject. They do not really touch us. And they do not bear the test of translation. Put it into English, what becomes of them? They simply dry up. The English reader might well exclaim, "We have heard all that before, in much better language." But let us take one verse of a Scotch song by Robert Burns which is known the whole world over, and which was written by a man who always wrote out of his heart:

(Original in Scotch dialect)

We two had paddled in the brook
From morning sun till noon,

But seas between us broad have roared
Since auld lang syne!*

When I put that into English, the music is gone, and the beauty of several dialect-words such as "dine" (meaning the dinner hour, therefore the midday), and the melody have disappeared. Still the poetry remains. Two men meet each other in some foreign country, after years of separation; and one reminds the other of childhood days, when both played in the village brook from the sunrise until dinner-time—so much delighted by the water! "Only a little brook," one says; — "but the breadth of oceans, the width of half the world, has been between us since that time." Now, anybody who, as a boy, loved to play or swim in the stream of his native village with other boys, can feel what the poet means: whether he be a Japanese or a Scotchman makes no difference at all. That is poetry.

And now, so much having been said on the subject of the emotional essence of poetry, I want to tell you that in the course of such lectures on poetry as we shall have in the course of the academic year, I shall try always to keep these facts before you, and to select for our readings only those things which contain the sort of poetry that will bear the test of translation. Much of our English poetry will not do this. I think, for example, that it is a great mistake to set before Japanese students such eighteenth century verse as the verse of Pope. As verse it is perhaps the most perfect in the English language; as poetry, it is nothing at all. The essence of poetry is not in his poetry, nor is it to be found in most of the eighteenth century school. That was an age in which it was the fashion to keep all emotion suppressed. But Pope is a useful study for English classes in England, because of what English students can take from it through the mere study of form, of compact and power-

* The original form runs:—

We twa hae paidl'd in the burn,
Frae morning sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
Sin auld lang syne!

ful expression with very few words. Here, the situation is exactly converse. The value of foreign poetry to you cannot be in the direction of form. Foreign form cannot be reproduced in Japanese any more than French can be reproduced in English. The value of foreign poetry to you must be in what makes the soul, the heart, the essence of all true poetry:—feeling and imagination. Foreign feeling and foreign imagination may help to add something to the beauty and the best quality of future Japanese poetry. There, I think, the worth of study may be very great. But when foreign poetry means nothing but correct verse, you might as well waste no time upon it; as there is much great poetry which has good form as well as strong feeling.

CHAPTER II

ENGLISH BALLADS

FIRST of all let us attempt to define what a ballad is. In different languages the word has not the same meaning. A French man of letters uses the word "ballad" in a much narrower sense than the German; and even the German does not always give to it the same breadth of meaning that the English poets attached to it. Furthermore, exact scholars give narrower interpretations to the name than do men of letters generally. But we cannot restrict the significance of the word as certain scholars would have us do, simply because all attempts to establish a sharp line between ballads proper and other forms of poetry closely resembling them, have proved futile. The best way for us to do will be to take the word "ballad" in its very largest English meaning, as signifying a short narrative story in simple verse. Although the majority of ballads take certain forms, many do not; and it would not be correct to say that a poem is not a ballad because it happens to be in one kind of verse rather than another. It has been among my own pupils a matter of difficulty sometimes to distinguish a long narrative poem or epic from a ballad; they have observed with good reason that certain English ballads are very long. But they are not so long as to be compared with other forms of narrative poetry; and in a general way it may be stated that a ballad tells one simple story or incident only. Epics, in some cases, not only tell a great many different stories related to each other, but form what we might call a romance or a novel in verse.

We may at once attempt to state what a ballad is not. It is not a romance, nor is it necessarily a complete story.

It deals rather with incidents than with complete or full narratives. When we have one great collection of ballads, possessing a fixed order, and all dealing with or relating to one subject, as in the English cycle of Robin Hood, or in the Persian cycle of Kurroglou, then we have what has been called a ballad-epic; but it is really an epic too. With this view of the case you might ask if the "Song of Roland" might not be called a ballad-epic. It is indeed divided into a number of distinct parts, each independent of the other, arranged for singing, and having a burden or chorus. Were the term ballad-epic really admissible, I should say yes; but for the sake of definiteness we had better say no — especially as the style and tone are a little too high for what we usually call a ballad.

A ballad is not to be confounded either with a song or with a lyric of any sort, although the line of demarcation may sometimes be hard to draw. A song does not necessarily do more than express an emotion, independent of any story or incident. A lyric is any poem expressing one single feeling or thought of an emotional kind, and not composed in any classic or severe form of verse.

Now let us consider the general characteristics of the ballad. The word itself gives some hint of the character of the composition. It is derived from the low Latin, from a verb signifying to dance. In the Italian *ballare*, Spanish *bailar* (both meaning to dance), the English word *ball*, a dancing party; and the English word, adopted from the French, ballet, meaning the artistic professional dances performed in theatres, — we have the survival in modified form of the ancient low Latin verb. Originally the ballad was a song accompanied with dancing. But do not let this derivation cause any confusion in the mind between song proper and the ballad. The earliest forms of song were necessarily religious or military; they celebrated incidents. They were not really lyrics. The history of the term carries us back to very primitive forms of poetical composition, made in the days before writing was known, and learned

by heart generation after generation, each generation probably improving a little upon the oral text. It is even probable that all the great epics of all countries grew out of beginnings like this. Primitive races kept alive the memories of their traditions, of their glories and their sorrows, by song; and the songs were publicly sung on certain occasions, accompanied with religious or war-like or other dances. Not all the people would be equally capable of singing; there would be famous singers or professional singers, like what are called the *ondo-tori* in Japan. These would do the difficult part of the singing; but the people would join in the more familiar parts of the song. Later there would arise an orderly distinction between the parts to be sung by professional singers, and the shorter or more simple parts to be sung by the crowd. The part to be sung by the crowd eventually took in English the name of "burthen" (burden). The word "chorus," sometimes meaning the same thing, is from the Greek; but the Greek word is of dramatic origin, and strictly speaking means much more than a simple burthen. The word "refrain" (from the French) is a better equivalent for our English burthen.

Now the first characteristic of the true ballad, even in modern times, is the refrain or burthen. It may be quite impossible to sing, but it represents the survival of the ancient burthen. Nevertheless, remember that not all ballads have burthens,—though the burthen is the peculiar mark of such compositions. Furthermore, remember that many songs have a chorus or burthen, by which they very much resemble ballads, although they cannot always be classed as ballads.

A second characteristic of ballads is their simplicity. A perfect ballad ought always to be so simple that everybody, no matter how ignorant, can understand it; and its emotion ought to be of such a nature as to appeal to the heart of a child just as well as to the imagination of a man. Every approach to complexity or subtlety is a departure from the true nature of the ballad. Therefore many of the most

beautiful lyrical compositions of the nineteenth century, although ballads in form, are not ballads in spirit; for they appeal only to the intelligence and aesthetic taste of very cultivated people.

Most of the world's famous ballads, as representing popular feeling and a very early form of composition, were naturally written in the speech of the people, not in the language of the educated classes. So we may say that a third general characteristic of ballad composition is the fact of its being in colloquial speech, or even in dialect. But here again you must remember that not all ballads are so written, and that we are looking only at the general indications.

With the spread of education and the many social changes which have sharpened men's minds, it could not but follow that ballad writing as an art should become extinct. But this does not mean that the art itself is vulgar. Quite the contrary. It only means that the effects of education and knowledge destroy that capacity for purely natural feeling and simple expression that characterizes ballads. Educate the peasant, and you take all the poetry out of his soul. If you could educate him to the highest point, he would obtain, of course, a new poetical feeling; but the necessities of civilization allow him time to learn only the simplest forms of education; and these are just sufficient to destroy much of pleasure that he formerly found in life. Anciently woods and streams were peopled for him with invisible beings; angels and demons walked at his side; the woods had their fairies, the mountains their goblins, the marshes their flitting spirits; and the dead came back to him at times to bear a message or to rebuke a fault. Also the ground that he trod upon, the plants growing in the field, the clouds above him, the lights of heaven, all were full of mystery and ghostliness. Educate him, and he becomes a good deal of a materialist; for his gods vanish, his fairies and ghosts cease to exist, and modern chemistry, which he is obliged to learn something about,

teaches him that the virtues of plants and the qualities of the soil that bears them do not depend upon spiritual matters at all. Furthermore, industrialism impels him to seek the great cities and abandon nature whenever he can find the opportunity. He is thus gradually drawn away from everything that inspired in former times his simple verse. At school he learns to express his feelings and ideas in conventional language; should he speak like his fathers, he is laughed at as a countryman. Yet his fathers, who knew so little, were capable without effort of writing such poetry that the greatest of our modern poets can scarcely do anything equal to them. The change is inevitable, and cannot be helped. But it has been so much regretted that I doubt whether a single poet of the nineteenth century, of any real importance, has not tried, and tried in vain for the most part, to write as good a ballad as did the ignorant peasant of two or three hundred years ago. Even at random, one can name a number of such attempts made by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Byron, Shelley, Sir Walter Scott, Tennyson, the two Brownings, Rossetti, Swinburne. It would be folly to protest, in the face of such evidence, that ballad-literature is not worthy of scholarly attention.

A curious fact is the persistence of ballad-compositions even into our own time, and after the true art was dead. I am not now speaking about the poets, but about the common people. During my own boyhood, in London, it was still the custom to compose ballads when any extraordinary event occurred that greatly stirred public emotion — an unhappy suicide, a peculiar murder, a political incident of some unusual description. These were written in the language of the lower classes—I might say in cockney English —printed upon large sheets of paper, and sold for a penny apiece by the composer, after he had gathered a crowd round him by singing them in the public streets. Of course, in these cases, the songs were really vulgar, and without any poetical interest whatever; but the spectacle of the ballad singer and his ballad was in the highest degree in-

teresting, for these represented the survival of habits and customs that gave to English literature a great deal of true and noble verse.

Now a few words about the general structure of the old English ballads. They were mostly composed in two forms, the quatrain and the distich. But there were many other forms. The distich form, very common in northern Europe, was less popular in England than the quatrain. The quatrain was composed with only two rhymes — the second and fourth lines rhyming with each other,—so that it would be possible to print the quatrain verses in distich form, though the lines might be very long. Many of the ballads had burthens; and the usual form of the burthen was simple,—that is, it consisted of but one or two lines repeated over and over again with each verse. Most often the burthen was fitted into the quatrain so as to make a part of it. But this was not always the case. Those highly elaborate refrains in the ballads of Rossetti are imitations and combinations of forms that may be found scattered through our large collections of English ballads, with perhaps a few notions taken also from the ballads of other languages. Do not fail to observe that these few remarks which I am making about the English ballad would also apply, with some modifications, to the oral literature of all Europe. Except perhaps the Italian, there is no language which is not quite as rich in ballads as the English — some are even more so.

An example of double refrain is most common with the quatrain; and in this case the quatrain contains really only two lines of narration, the other two lines being refrains. For example, the second line might be

So fair upriseth the rim of the sun,

and the fourth,

So grey is the sea when the day is done.

In such a case the second and the fourth lines of every

stanza from beginning to end would be the same, and in printing ballads we usually print the burthen in italics. Here you may be naturally inclined to ask what relation does the burthen bear to the meaning of ballad. In the old ballads it seldom bears any relation at all to the subject—has nothing to do with it. Then you may ask why not. There is only one explanation that I can give you, and it is this: new ballads were generally composed to be sung to the tune of older ballads, and although the main part of the older ballad in such a case would be forgotten as it ceased to be popular, the old refrain would be preserved by the liking of the people for it—having been accustomed to sing it in a great chorus, they would persist in singing it even with the new ballad. Then, again, popular song-writers, having observed this fact, would presently begin to compose new songs with old refrains, knowing that the old refrains would "catch the people." If you bear these possibilities in mind, you will easily perceive that there is nothing extraordinary about the fact of a refrain having nothing to do with its ballad. In my opinion most of our ballad burthens represent the only extant portions of hundreds of older compositions that have been for ever lost. And my theory is supported by the existence of a number of different ballads, undoubtedly written at different times and all having the same refrain, or a part of it. Yet in some cases we find that the refrain, as in modern ballads, is made to bear a relation to the story. Such is the case in the ballad of "The Twa Sisters," with its refrain treating of the locality where the tragedy took place—

> There was twa sisters liv'd in a bower,
> *Binnorie, O Binnorie!*
> There came a knight to be their wooer,
> *By the bonny mill-dams o' Binnorie.*

On the other hand, in the ballad of "The Cruel Mother" there is no connection at all between the burthen and the story. It is worth while for you to copy the text of the

whole of this ballad as an example of the most striking qualities of such compositions, especially because you will not find this version in the ordinary collections.

She leaned her head against a thorn,
(*The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall!*)
And there she has her young babe born.
(*And the lion shall be lord of all!*)

"Smile not so sweet, my bonny babe,
(*The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall!*)
And ye smile so sweet, ye'll smile me dead."
(*And the lion shall be lord of all!*)

She's howket a grave by the light of the moon,
(*The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall!*)
And there she's buried her sweet babe in.
(*And the lion shall be lord of all!*)

As she was going to the church,
(*The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall!*)
She saw a sweet babe in the porch.
(*And the lion shall be lord of all!*)

"O bonny babe, an ye were mine,
(*The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall!*)
I'd clad ye in silk and sabelline."
(*And the lion shall be lord of all!*)

"O mother mine, when I was thine,
(*The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall!*)
To me ye were not half so kind.
(*And the lion shall be lord of all!*)

"But now I'm in the heavens hie,
(*The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall!*)
And ye have the pains of hell to dree."
(*And the lion shall be lord of all!*)

Here we have a story told in a few lines, but with extraordinary power, for once read, this ballad never can be forgotten. A young girl, to hide her shame, determines to kill

her illegitimate child, but at the moment of the act, the child smiles in her face, and this almost prevents the crime. Nevertheless it is accomplished, the child is secretly buried; no one knows of the act; and the mother returns to her life in society as if nothing had happened. But one day as she is about to enter a church, she sees a child of such remarkable beauty that her natural affection is aroused, and she cannot help saying to the little creature, "Oh, how beautifully I should dress you if you were my boy." The child's answer immediately reveals to her that she is speaking to the ghost of the child she has murdered,—"O mother, when I was your boy, you were not so kind!" The great art of this poem — probably the composition of some peasant — is all in the second verse. This is intensely human, and terribly touching.

Sir Walter Scott, who heard this ballad sung to him by his nurse when he was a child, afterwards made an imitation of it, using the first half of the burthen, and in the second half substituting "Love" for "the lion." His imitation is very pretty and very touching in its way; but it lacks altogether the weird power of the old ballad.

This is the common form of double burthen. Triple burthens occur sometimes. The Quadruple are very rare. Generally speaking, the refrain is more frequent in the northern English or Scotch ballad than in the English ballads proper. A majority of our ballads have, indeed, no refrain at all. All those elaborate forms of burthen, such as you find in Rossetti and in Swinburne, are quite foreign to the spirit and simplicity of the old burthens, and must be regarded as of purely modern construction.

I need not go to any greater length on the subject of the refrain. The next thing to observe is that the bulk of English ballads are verses of eight syllables, this being euphonically the most natural form of English construction. Now, as regards the value of these compositions to you, a few words will be necessary. Although ballad-literature contains many beauties of an astonishing kind, you would

make a great mistake in supposing that the general average of the compositions is high. Quite the contrary is the case. Our great collections of ballads, notably that of Professor Child, contain a very large amount of insignificant or vulgar material, quite useless to the man of letters. Nevertheless the man of letters must read them. The precious part of such literature exists only as gold exists in the natural state, mixed with various forms of sand or of hard rock. Sometimes we find an absolutely perfect ballad, just as a gold miner sometimes finds a lump or nugget of pure gold. But this is rare. The study of ballads requires great patience; and in your case especially so, because most of them, and nearly all the best, are in dialect, and cannot be properly studied without the help of a glossary. Furthermore, the worth of such study must depend entirely upon your individual capacity for poetical feeling; this is of nature, and if you have it not, it is of no use to occupy yourselves with the study at all. But, if on reading a few of the best of such compositions, you feel your heart moved by them, I should then by all means advise you to follow up the study; for it would certainly have a considerable effect upon your literary studies and tastes in other directions. Again, those of you who know French and German would do well to pay a corresponding attention to the French and German ballads, especially the German.

The influence of the ballads in modern poetry was perhaps more marked in Germany than in England, and the first publication of the English ballads by Bishop Percy had an immense effect upon German poetry. In the time of Percy, Dr. Johnson strongly attacked the new taste, from the classical point of view, but in spite of his opposition, the imitation of the ballad began even in his own time. Goldsmith, for example, with his ballad of "Edwin and Angelina," shows the influence; but the poem itself also shows how little Goldsmith really understood how much the ballad form depends for success upon its simplicity. Such lines as

To where yon taper cheers the vale,
With *hospitable* ray!

or

Where wilds *immeasurably* spread,
Seem *lengthening* as I go!

are in the pedantic taste of the time. No old ballad writer would have used such big words as "hospitable," "immeasurably," or even "lengthening." The old singers used words of two syllables only when they could not find a word of one to express their meaning. So Goldsmith's poem, although a ballad, is by no means a successful imitation. Burns was a song writer rather than a balladist; and before Sir Walter Scott we have scarcely any noteworthy imitations of the old ballad, except the magnificent composition of Hamilton of Bangour, "The Braes of Yarrow," beginning

Busk ye, busk ye, my bony bony bride.

The only criticism to be made of Hamilton's composition is that its rhyme and melody are too astonishingly perfect. We have no ancient ballad of so complicated a form. Coleridge's "Love" is open to the same objection as Goldsmith's composition, though in a lesser degree. It is obviously artificial. Wordsworth's ballads, some of them, come much nearer to the proper standard of simplicity. But Sir Walter Scott, who from childhood heard the old Scotch ballads sung by the people, and who knew the dialect as a mother tongue, was really the first to imitate the old ballad with a fair degree of success. The difficulty of the feat was not, perhaps, appreciated until a later day. Of great Victorian singers, very few have been able to do as well as Sir Walter Scott. The best examples of which I can think for the moment are Tennyson's "Lady Clare" and Rossetti's "Stratton Water." As a rule our best poets understand that it is almost impossible to repeat the feats of ancient balladists; and while they continue indeed to write ballads,

these are compositions of an altogether artistic and very elaborate kind. The subject of the modern ballad proper belongs to lyrical poetry, and cannot be separately considered, because of the immense variety of the forms used, and the departure from all ancient rules.

And now it only remains for us to attempt some advice on the subject of choice in the study of the old ballads. I will offer only a few titles; because the reading of a few poems of this kind will be quite a sufficient test of your own taste in this direction. The two most important classes of ballad, in regard to emotional expression, are the fairy ballads, and the love ballads. Of the fairy ballads there are not many; but of the love ballads there is an enormous variety. Taking the fairy ballads first, I should remark to you that the most beautiful and most important of all is "Tam Lin," — and that the best version of this (because there are very great many versions) is that to be found in the "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border." Next to this in importance is perhaps the very famous poem of "Thomas the Rhymer," to be found in the same book. Thirdly I would recommend "Kemp Owyne," and fourthly "The Earl of Mar's Daughter." The last mentioned, you would do well to read in the first volume of Child's collection.

Next about the love ballads. I think the most beautiful of all is "Child Waters,"—you will find it in Child's collection. Next in interest, perhaps, is the more fantastic ballad of "The Gay Goss-Hawk." And as the third, and as a tragical example, I should recommend that version of "Lord Thomas and Fair Annet" which you will find in the first volume of Child's.

Then everybody ought to know the ballad of "Sir Patrick Spens" (or Spence), and the story of "Glenkindie,"—about the harper who

> Could harp the fish out o' the sea
> Or blood out of a stane,
> Or milk out o' the maiden's breast
> That never bairns had nane.

If you want the horrible, there is nothing more horrible in ballad literature than the story of "Lady Maisry," which you will find in the first volume of Child; and if you want the heroic, there is no finer story in the same collection than that of "The Douglas Tragedy." The student also should certainly read some of Sir Walter Scott's imitations, the best of which are the terrible "Glenfinlas," "The Eve of Saint John," and "The Gray Brother,"—as well as some of his splendid translations of German ballads, which first gave him his reputation.

In conclusion, let us return again to the question of what is a ballad. We cannot make any better definition than this:—"A ballad is a short narrative poem composed for singing or reciting." In spite of all exceptions, remember that this is the important part of the definition, and that especial emphasis must be placed upon the word "narrative."

But you will very naturally ask, "How is it that a great many poems which do not fulfil this condition are called ballads by the great masters of poetry?" For instance, Wordsworth and Coleridge called their first work "Lyrical Ballads"; Tennyson published volumes under the name of ballads; Rossetti's first poems were issued under the title of "Ballads and Poems"; most of Swinburne's works, and a great deal of Browning's, has been given the same general name. Yet a great number of the compositions thus labelled are certainly not ballads in the old English sense, and this is particularly the case with the works of Swinburne. Here we have to reckon with the ambiguity of the word. What Swinburne usually means by a ballad is what French poets call *ballade*, a very complicated form of verse, which need not be a narrative poem at all, but simply a lyric. And the other great poets named sometimes used the English word in the same loose signification. Moreover, custom is now strengthening the ambiguity; and a new ballad-literature is growing which takes forms of the most elaborate lyrical description. However, please bear in mind this fact, that

for you the study of ballad-literature will be most useful when it is made comparative and reduced to the simplest arrangement. I refer to the comparison between Japanese and European narrative poems of the simpler kind. The limits of this kind will become tolerably well established in your memory by the simple reading of those English ballads whose titles I have recommended.

CHAPTER III

ON THE STORIES OF THE BEST ENGLISH BALLADS

If you look at the great collection of English ballads made by Prof. Child in eight volumes, you will easily recognize that the literature of the subject is extensive — and that it must have no small value to have thus absorbed the best period of a scholar's life. The first good collector of this popular literature was Sir Walter Scott — another proof that the subject is not to be lightly treated. I have often tried to arouse in former pupils some interest in this popular literature, which has been the fountain of inspiration for every great English poet since Scott's time — Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, the two Rossettis, Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne: all these studied and imitated the old ballads. Perhaps Shelley did not study them much; but even he derived something from them; and I do not think the great poets of the last century can really be understood without some understanding of narrative poetry from which they learned so much. But I have not been able so far to awaken much real interest on the subject; and I imagine that the chief reason is the dialect in which the ballads are written. Dialect is an apparent obstacle, and disheartens the student at sight. But I imagine that he is thinking in such moments, of the dialect of Burns — that he supposes the ballad dialect equally difficult. It is not. With a little patience only — you need not even use a glossary at all — the dialect of the best ballads can be easily mastered. To-day I am going to treat of the ballads in a totally different way — hoping to be more successful in pleasing you. I shall only talk about the very best ballads in the English language, and try to explain the merits in them.

There are not many of the best—in spite of those eight volumes of nearly four hundred pages each. There are really only about five or six which it is indispensable to know, — indispensable because they have inspired so many works of art (paintings, drawings, even statues) and because you can scarcely open a book of good literature in which some reference to them is not made. The other day only, one of you asked me about a quotation in Kingsley, which I did not at the moment recognize. It did not occur to me until the evening of the same day that the extract was from an old ballad of which the story probably dates back to the time of the Crusades. The ballad "Young Beichan" happens to be known by several names; it is not one of the very best, but we may have occasion to mention it later on.

I believe that the ballad of "Childe Waters" is acknowledged by most great poets and critics to be the best of all the English ballads. I do not myself like it so much as a Scotch ballad "Tam Lin" which I place next in order. But I must submit my judgment now to the judgment of men much wiser; and therefore I shall put "Childe Waters" first. I do not know whether it will please you; but it has pleased millions and millions of Western people, and it has been the subject of many paintings, and you should try to understand why it has been so much liked. The reason that I cannot altogether like it is only that it seems to me too cruel; but it is the story of a cruel age, — and the singer purposely made the cruelty as strong as possible in order to bring out more radiantly the contrast of the opposite qualities, gentleness and patience. Childe Waters is a nobleman who has seduced a country girl—probably a girl of good family, under promise of marriage. When she finds herself in a delicate situation, she wants him to befriend her; but he determines to put her affection to every possible test. He is a cruel man, though not altogether bad, as we shall see in the end. It is a queer fact that the story of "The Nutbrowne Maide", one of the earliest in English literature which has

a dialogue form, turns upon the test of a woman's affection. But the author of "The Nutbrowne Maide" must have been to school, and his training may have kept him from being too cruel. The author of "Childe Waters" was probably an unschooled man of the people, who felt no restraint upon his sincerity, and who made his verses as simply as birds sing. Let us now take the story, using the original verse now and then, when the poet rises to his best. It begins, like all good ballads, not at the beginning, but in the middle of the story.

Childe Waters in his stable stoode
  And stroakt his milke-white steede;
To him a fayre yonge ladye came
  As ever ware womans weede.

Sayes, "Christ you save, good Childe Waters,"
  Sayes, "Christ you save and see;
My girdle of gold that was too longe,
  Is now too short for mee."

Of course this means that she is about to become a mother — indeed the next stanza states the fact much more directly. But Childe Waters is a suspicious man; he does not show her any sympathy, and replies—

"If the child be mine, faire Ellen," he sayd,
  "Be mine as you tell mee,
Then take you Cheshire and Lancashire both,
  Take them your owne to bee.

"If, the childe be mine, faire Ellen," he sayd,
  "Be mine, as you doe sweare,
Then take you Cheshire and Lancashire both,
  And make that child your heyre."

Childe Waters is a gentleman — in the worldly sense of the term. He is quite willing to be generous with his mistress, to pay her handsomely. But that is not what she wants: she is a good woman, in spite of her imprudence,

and it is his love that she wants, not his money. He may give her all the land in England, and she would think it worth nothing in comparison with his real affection. Her answer is beautiful in its passionate sincerity:—

> Shee sayes, "I had rather have one kisse,
> Childe Waters, of thy mouth,
> Than I wolde have Cheshire and Lancashire both,
> That lye by north and southe.
>
> "And I had rather have one twinkling,
> Childe Waters, of thine ee,
> Than I wolde have Cheshire and Lancashire both,
> To take them mine owne to bee."

So that is what she wants! to become his wife? Does she really love him as she says? — or does she only love position,—want to become the wife of a lord? Evidently she does not care anything about money; but perhaps she cares for position—perhaps she is afraid of shame. In that case he will give her an opportunity to prove her affection—and he will do this without mercy, without the slightest sign of pity. He instantly tells her that he has to go north, and that he wants a pretty woman to travel with him. It is a brutal answer; but she immediately replies:—

> "Thoughe I am not that ladye fayre,
> Yet let me go with thee:
> And ever I pray you, Childe Waters,
> Your foot-page let me bee."

She is not pretty enough for him—she humbly says—but will he not let her go with him as a foot-page. Remember that the foot-page had to run by the horse, like the Japanese *betto.*

"You want to be my foot-page — do you?" he says. "Very well; you must dress in a boy's clothes, and cut off your hair." A woman does not like to sacrifice her hair, especially if it is very beautiful. But she cuts it off without

any hesitation, and runs by the horse. You might suppose that, for the sake of the child, the man rides slow. But he does not. Probably he understands how much the woman can bear. He rides fast. They come to a river. "Can you swim?" he asks. "No", she answers; "but I can try." Into the deep water he spurs his horse and *swims* his horse across the stream. And she follows him. Here comes the stanza from which Macaulay quoted, in writing his ballad of Horatius:—

> The salt waters bare up her clothes,
> Our Ladye bare up her chinne;
> Childe Waters was a woe man, good Lord,
> To see faire Ellen swimme!

Perhaps he was sorry in his heart; but the heart of the lord of the feudal age was iron; — and he only thought of himself, "She can bear more than that." At last they come to his castle. Instead of saying one kind word to her he tells her that he has a mistress, much more beautiful than she in that castle. She answers sweetly, "Then I will wait upon her." A banquet is held to celebrate the lord's arrival; but he makes the tired woman wait upon the table, until a lady in the house remarks how handsome this servant is. "More like a girl than a boy" says another lady. But the old grey mother with a mother's eye understands the whole story at once, — and she maliciously observes, — "A girl — no, a woman great with child." The lord gives his mother one quick glance to impose silence, and orders Ellen to leave the room, and to go and eat in the kitchen. But her trials are not yet over for that night—he tells her that she must go out and find him a female companion for the evening — "And she must be very pretty" he tells her. She does this. Then she is told to go and sleep in the stable among the horses. She does so without complaint. But in the middle of the night her child is born, born among the feet of the horses. Even the horses are kind to her: they keep still for her sake. After that her troubles

are at an end. She has been tried to the uttermost. Now comes the lord, takes up his young son tenderly, and says to the mother, "Wife and lady you shall be, and this boy shall inherit all things after me, and our wedding and your churching shall be upon the same day." That is the story. It is a cruel story; but it ends well. To understand the merit of it we must remember that the people of those times were hardier — a woman could bear much more pain than a woman of to-day. Was it necessary to test affection in so cruel a way? No: but fair Ellen had herself to blame. Why did she lower herself to be seduced before the time in which she might have been married? The lord's position was logical and something like this: "Nobody can trust the honour of a woman who has been morally weak — not at least until she shows that she can be morally strong. I shall torture this woman therefore until I find out whether she is morally strong. And if she is strong, then I will marry her." But of course the cruelty was atrocious.

In the foregoing ballad we had an example of what physical and moral pain a woman could bear for love's sake. In the next ballad we have an account of what a woman could do for love's sake in a still more difficult direction. I mean against supernatural enemies, goblins, and fairies. You may say that this is a story of the impossible,—therefore not worthy of serious consideration. But in this judgment you would be wrong. The supernatural world of goblins and fairies is really only symbolical of what men most fear in reality. There is no supernatural fancy, no superstition, which does not shadow some truth. I understand this poem to represent only what a woman is really capable of, for love's sake, in the presence of danger and death. Have not even sisters been known to save an infant brother by facing tigers and lions? Have not mothers gone into fire to save their children? What would not a mother do to save her child? And, after all, are not the realities of fire and of tigers much more dreadful than would be the realities of ghosts and fairies? Try to think

of the ballad in this way; and you will find it beautiful. The name of this ballad is "Tam Lin;" — there are many versions, but the best is this which Walter Scott wrote down from dictation. Occasionally this ballad appears in anthologies, but when it does, it is shortened by foolish people, on account of a single stanza. We need not be foolish; and we can read the stanza in question.

There is supposed to be, out in the country, in Scotland, at a place called Carterhaugh, a hill haunted by a fairy in the shape of a beautiful man. Whenever a girl happens to be alone in that neighborhood, the man comes and demands payment, for her presence in his domain. She must either give him some article of value or give him her virginity. Therefore it is very dangerous to go to that place. A mother is supposed to be speaking, or perhaps a father, in the opening verses of the ballad.

"O I forbid ye, maidens all,
  That wear gold on your hair,
To come or go by Carterhaugh,
  For young Tamlane is there.

"There's none that goes by Carterhaugh,
  But must leave him a wad,
Either gold rings or green mantles,
  Or else their maidenhood.

"Now gold rings ye may buy, maidens,
  Green mantles ye may spin;
  But, if ye lose your maidenhood,
  Ye'll ne'er get that again."

In spite of this warning, a spirited girl called Janet, insists on going to Carterhaugh. When the fairy-man comes, she refuses to be afraid, and refuses to give him any pledge. But she returns home, not a maiden, but a pregnant woman. Great is the family's scandal. In this part of the poem the singer shows a great deal of humour as well as of pathos. In repeating Janet's sharp answers to people who would insult

her in consequence. She bravely says that she did nothing wrong; that she has only been unfortunate;—that the father of the child is not a man, but a fairy; — and that in spite of his being a fairy, she is going to force him to marry her, and to become a good father to the child. Everybody thinks this impossible, but the brave woman knows that she can do it, and she does—

She goes again by herself to the haunted hill, and waits until the fairy stands before her. There is an adjuration, or prayer by which all spirits or goblins can be made to answer questions asked them; and she repeats that adjuration—demanding the fairy to tell her truly whether he is a fairy born, or only an adopted fairy — a stolen child. (For it was long believed, and is still believed in some parts of Europe that fairies steal children and change them into fairies.) He answers her according to the truth—which she suspects: he is really a human being, the son of a great nobleman; but he was stolen by the fairies when a child. The incident of the stealing is worth quoting — because it illustrates a queer superstition, which you will find still better told in a very weird modern poem by Sir Samuel Ferguson, entitled, "The Fairy Thorn."

> "There came a wind out of the north,
> A sharp wind and a snell;
> And a deep sleep came over me,
> And from my horse I fell."

The fairy spell is usually described as coming with a strange cold (or "snell") wind, as the ballad here relates. This fairy Tamlane does not wish to remain a fairy: he would be glad to return again to the world of humanity. But he cannot do so, unless some woman have courage enough to save him, by daring all sorts of supernatural dangers.

"On a certain night," he says, "I and all the fairies will ride by a place that you know; and if you are then brave enough to pull me off my horse, and hold me tightly,

until all the fairies go away, I can become a man again. But as you hold me I shall change shape — I shall become fire, I shall become a monster, I shall become a snake. At last I shall become simply a naked man; then throw your cloak over me, and I am saved."

She goes to the place which he has mentioned at midnight; and sure enough, the fairies come riding by, preceded by the will-o'-the-wisp. She is brave, and watches for him; and the rest is told better in verse than in prose:

And first went by the black black steed,
  And then went by the brown;
But fast she gript the milk-white steed,
  And pulled the rider down.

She pulled him from the milk-white steed,
  And let the bridle fall;
And up there raise a ghastly cry—
  "He's won among us all!"—

They shaped him in fair Janet's arms,
  An esk, but and an adder;
She held him fast in every shape—
  To be her bairn's father.

They shaped him in her arms at last,
  A mother-naked man:
She wrapt him in her green mantle,
  And so her true love won!

. . . . . .

Up then spake the Queen of Fairies,
  Out of a bush of rye—
"She's taken away the finest knight
  In all my company."

. . . . . .

"Had I but known, Tamlane," she says,
  "Before you came from home—
I'd have taken out your heart of flesh,
  Put in a heart of stone."

And so the ballad story comes to a happy ending. In the book you will find three or four different versions; and in Scott's, which is the best, the description of the transformation of the fairy into all kinds of monster shapes is most weirdly and powerfully told. It is the emotional quality of the poem, combined with the supernatural element, which has made it so famous. All through Northern Europe the story is known. But it is very curious to remember that there is a very old Greek story of the same kind told by Homer. You will find it in the Odyssey, and you will find it elsewhere. The story is of the God Proteus, who could be made to tell his divine secret only by the person who had the courage to hold him fast while he was changing shape. If any person was brave enough to do that the god would tell him whatever he wished to know. It is certainly very strange to find the Scotch ballad containing the Greek myth, quite independently of any scholarship. Perhaps we have here one of those world stories of which the origin is older than any literature.

The third of the old ballads about which every student ought, I think, to know something is "Thomas the Rhymer." It is very frequently referred to in literature; and, like the preceding one, is a fairy tale. I am sorry to say that the best version of it is in a very old dialect, and that you would have to read it very patiently, in order to see the quaint and curious beauty of it. Everybody knows the later version printed by Scott; but only men of letters know the older version, which you will find on page 97 of the first volume of Professor Child's work. This may be as old as the fifteenth century — let us say 1450. I shall not quote; but merely epitomize the narrative. A wandering musician named Thomas of Erseldune (the name spelt in many ways) was one day resting under a tree, by the wayside, when there appeared before him so beautiful a woman that he imagined he saw the Virgin Mary. But she told him that he must not worship her: she was only the Queen of the Fairies. The more Thomas looked at her, the more

he admired her; and she warned him that he must not admire her too much. Nevertheless he dared to make love to her. She told him, "If you kiss me, you will belong to me, body and soul." He is not afraid and kisses her; but from that hour he becomes her slave, and she takes him with her into the fairy world for the time of seven years. In the older version there is a curious account, which you do not find in Scott's version. As soon as Thomas has embraced the Queen of the Fairies, her beauty suddenly withers; and she becomes a hideous old woman. Now this is the most interesting part of the narrative to the folklorist. All through the legends of mediæval superstition you will find that the seer of magician must remain perfectly chaste in order to retain his supernatural faculty; and the spirits themselves remain strong or weak according to their purity in the matter of sex. Under any conditions of moral weakness the charm breaks. An immense amount of romantic incident has been founded upon these queer beliefs.

The ballad of Thomas ends happily, for after having remained seven years with the fairies, as a faithful servant, Thomas is allowed to return to the world. The parts of the poem particularly celebrated in literature belong to the new rather than to the old version; and they are celebrated particularly because of their fanciful charm. I mean the descriptions of fairy land and of its magical fruit. When Thomas is being taken to the palace of the Fairy Queen, they pass underneath the earth, and they cross the River of Blood:—

O they rode on, and farther on,
  And they waded through rivers above the knee,
And they saw neither sun nor moon,
  But they heard the roaring of the sea.

It was mirk mirk night, and there was no stern light,
  And they waded through red blood up to the knee;
For all the blood that is shed upon earth
  Runs through the springs of that country.

The River of Blood figures a good deal in Celtic folk-lore; and it has been used, symbolically, by not a few modern poets. The superstition was that the blood of murdered men never really dried up; but that sinking down through the earth it formed part of the River of Blood, whose voice perpetually calls to heaven for vengeance. All the poem, however, is not merely serious; there is humour, for example, in the disinclination expressed by Thomas not to eat the fruit of the fairy tree called the Tree of Truth. The man who eats the fruit of that tree is never afterwards able to tell a lie. Then says Thomas, "What shall I do? If I cannot tell a lie, how can I buy or sell anything? How can I even make love to a pretty woman? Unless the man can flatter and lie, he will always be at a disadvantage." But Thomas is obliged to eat the fruit. A commentator says that Thomas has here suggested the *immorality* of his age; but, when we come to think about it we may doubt if the world has much improved in truth-telling since the fifteenth century. It is quite as dangerous to tell the truth upon all occasions to-day as it would have been then.

The fourth ballad which I should recommend is the celebrated "Clerk Sunders" — of which the first stanza is often quoted:—

> Clerk Sunders and may Margaret
> Walk'd owre yon garden green;
> And deep and heavy was the love
> That fell thir twa between.

I need scarcely say that it is the third line of the above stanza which has made it famous, simply owing to the great effect produced by the adjectives deep and heavy. This is a very celebrated sad story. The use of the term "clerk" (pronounced clark) shows the antiquity of the composition. In the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, knights and even kings, distinguished for learning, were often called clerks in addition to their other titles — the word then

signifying simply scholar. Clerk Sunders was probably a knight of good family, and a scholar, but poor. He was very anxious to marry a young lady; but poverty delayed their lawful union, and very imprudently he visited her at night in her own room. This room seems to have been in a castle. The lovers were betrayed; and seven brothers of the girl entered the room where both were sleeping. Of course death was the penalty for such folly -- but, in this case there was consideration. The elder brother says, "It is accounted a great shame to kill a man asleep." The second brother says: "After all, those two really love each other." The third brother says, "They have been engaged to marry for many years." None of the brothers, except the youngest and the fiercest wishes to kill. But the youngest brother, without saying a word, passes his sword through the body of Clerk Sunders. Afterwards the father attempts to console the daughter in vain. I think that Rossetti certainly made use of this ballad when writing his "The Bride's Prelude." In that terrible poem also it is the youngest brother who is the fiercest; and it is the father who first forgives. . . .

May Margaret (may is an old-fashioned English word for maiden) does not care to be forgiven: she only wants to die. In the dead of the night her dead lover comes to her room again, and asks her to give him back the promise that she had made to him—the promise of betrothal. You will find this curious idea in many of the ballads of the European Middle Ages. It was thought that death did not dissolve an unfulfilled promise of this kind; and that, unless the living party agreed to dissolve the compact, the dead could not rest. And that is why the ghost comes to may Margaret. She loves too much to be afraid, and asks him, ghost though he is, to kiss her, once more before she gives him back the promise. He answers that he dare not kiss her — because the kiss of a ghost brings death. And she wants to die, but he will not kiss her, because it would be wrong. So she gives him his promise unconditionally; but

she follows him to the grave-yard, and asks him if there is any room at his head or at his feet. The ballad ends with the answer of the ghost,—telling her that the grave has no place for her, and that he only wants her to put flowers on his tomb and to promise him never again to do anything wrong, even for love's sake. You can see what a powerful story this is, and how mucn might be made out of it by a great artist. It exists throughout the whole of Northern Europe only in ballad form; but even in this popular and rude shape it is a touching romantic story which has given rise to many household words.

The fifth ballad that I would mention has many titles —"Glasgerion," "Glenkindie," etc.—not to speak of titles in the ballad poetry of other countries where the song is well known. It is celebrated especially, for those who love literary suggestion, by the stanza describing the magical power of music, and witchcraft exercised by the great harper:—

> He could harp the fish out of the sea,
> Or blood out of a stane,
> Or milk out of the maiden's breast
> That never bairns had nane,

Powers of this kind are frequently attributed to musicians in the folklore poetry of the North—and above all, in the wonderful Finnish epic of the *Kalevala,* which is really an epic of music. But all of Glasgerion's music does not help him from being betrayed by his own servant, who, dressed in the clothes of his master, secretly by night visits his master's mistress. By his manner, which is vulgar, the fraud is discovered, and the lady kills herself. Then the musician avenges her. It is an unpleasant subject, only tragedy, but the English composition has great merit in the way of simplicity and force.

The ballad of Glasgerion has been made use of in very recent time: it helped to inspire an excellent contemporary ballad by Rudyard Kipling entitled "The Last Rhime of True

Thomas"—in which the power of a poet is very finely described. Although Thomas the Rhymer is the hero of the composition, the incidents of this poem were suggested altogether by Glasgerion and the other versions of the same story under various names. Some day I want to read you that ballad — to illustrate the extraordinary value which a poet can find in certain old and half-forgotten Anglo-Saxon words.

One more ballad I shall briefly mention: "Young Beichan"—the name is also given as Bekie in some versions; and there are quite a number. In point of literary value this ballad is not, I think, equal to any of the others which I have mentioned—certainly not equal to dozens that might be mentioned. But if I were only to consider ballads from the literary point of view, I should have to speak to you of about twenty more. The object of this lecture is only to interest you in the most famous—that is the most generally known and the most often quoted. "Young Beichan" is one of these; and the story is pretty. Up to the eighteenth century it was not uncommon for Englishmen or other Europeans to be captured by Barbary pirates, and sold as slaves into Northern Africa. Perhaps the story of "Young Beichan" originally dates from the Crusades, — and the captivity of some knights among the Saracens. But it might, again, refer to later events, quite possible within very modern times. Europeans sold into slavery and purchased by Mohamedan masters, might better their condition by becoming Mohamedans. When a slave refuses to follow the faith of his master, even to-day, among the Arabs or other Mohamedan people, he is likely to find his condition made worse for him. In this ballad the captive repeatedly refuses to be converted, and is very cruelly treated until his master's daughter takes pity on him. She makes this proposal to him—"I shall help you to escape to your own country; but, if I do that for you, against my father's will, it is because I love you; — and you must promise to marry me if I can ever find a chance to go to

your country." He promises—as he loves her already; and she finds him, not only the means of escape, but money and a good ship and friends. Then he gets back to England. In England he waits for her several years; but as he receives no message from her, he begins to imagine that she will never come; and he makes arrangements to marry another person. In the middle of the wedding ceremony the Moorish lady suddenly makes her appearance—to remind him of his promise to marry her, and he keeps the promise. The first bride is sent back home with a double dower by way of compensation; then a second wedding begins, with the Moorish girl for bride. It is thus a story of love, gratitude, and faith; and perhaps for that reason it was very popular. But the story is not at all original to the ballad. Several such stories belong to the old literature of the Crusade; and, curiously enough, an Arabian story, of almost exactly the same kind, relating to a Christian girl and a Moorish lover, was found and translated only a few years ago.

I have not said anything to you about such universally known ballads as "Sir Patrick Spens," "Fair Annie," or "The Demon Lover" or "The Gay Goshawk." Because these you must already know; they are in almost every anthology. What would be well worth while for some Japanese scholar to attempt, would be a rendering into melodious colloquial Japanese, some of the famous ballads that are not in every anthology. Perhaps students will generally feel disinclined to make such an attempt, considering the work unworthy of trained effort. However, I am quite sure that such an opinion is wrong, and that it will be recognized as wrong at a future date. The very greatest of Western scholars and poets have not thought it beneath them to do this very thing: they are doing it even at the present moment, with the popular literature of all countries. For they understand that nothing helps more speedily to enrich national fancy and feeling than a wide dissemination of the best elements in the popular sentiment and fancy of other countries.

I want now to close this lecture by quoting to you a modern ballad, closely imitated from the ancient, but much more artistic. This is the ballad by Kipling of which I spoke, written in Northern dialect, and treating symbolically of a very great subject—the power of the poet who can speak to the *people* of his nation. There was, at that time some talk about appointing the young Anglo-Indian to the English laureateship. He would certainly have been the best man for it, except Swinburne. Swinburne's candidacy was impossible, on account of his more than radical expression of opinion in relation to religion and morals. Kipling, on the other hand, was considered too young; — besides, the laureateship depends a great deal upon social and political influences. But Kipling did not want to be the laureate; he was more than the laureate already in fact, though not in social rank. And, perhaps, to express his opinion of the real place of a singer he may have printed this composition. Some verses of it, at least, ought to please you. It is entitled "The Last Rhyme of True Thomas."

The King has called for priest and cup,
  The King has taken spur and blade
To dub True Thomas as a belted knight,
  And all for the sake o' the songs he made.

They have sought him high, they have sought him low,
  They have sought him over down and lea;
They have found him by the milk-white thorn
  That guards the gates o' Faerie.

'Twas bent beneath and blue above,
  Their eyes were held that they might not see
The kine that grazed between the knowes,
  Oh, they were the Queens o' Faerie!

The burden of the ballad as you will see presently is the most artistic part of it. And we shall find that the art is altogether in the use of ancient English words. "Bent" of course means grass; but unless you have been among

English country people, you might never have heard the term. "Knowes" is the same as "knolls;" but here the student of English poetry is reminded of a famous Scotch woman, who sang before the time of Robert Burns, and made a very famous song entitled "Ca' the yowes to the knowes,"—that is, "Call the sheep out to the grazing hill." However, what I want to call your notice particularly to here, is the correct use of the word "faerie" in this modern ballad. Properly speaking the word "fairy"—it does not matter how you spell it—means magic, and does not mean a being of any kind. Fairyland, or fairy, properly means the land of magic. What is commonly understood by a fairy is a spirit; but the true English word for this spirit is Elf. And in old ballads we find the term "faery-elf" sometimes, meaning a wonder-working or magical spirit. Of course to-day we mean spirit when we say fairy; but it did not have that meaning in olden time,—and if we make a correct imitation of an old ballad we ought to remember the fact as the poet does.

"Now cease your song," the King he said,
  "O, cease your song and get you dight
To vow your vow and watch your arms,
  For I will dub you a belted knight.

"For I will give you a horse o' pride,
  Wi' blazon and spur and page and squire;
Wi' keep and tail and seizin and law,
  And land to hold at your desire."

True Thomas smiled above his harp,
  And turned his face to the naked sky,
Where, blown before the wastrel wind,
  The thistle-down she floated by.

"I ha' vowed my vow in another place,
  And bitter oath it was on me,
I ha' watched my arms the lee-long night
  Where five-score fighting-men would flee.

"My lance is tipped o' the hammered flame,
  My shield is beat o' the moonlight cold;
And I won my spurs in the Middle World,
  A thousand fathoms beneath the mould.

"And what should I make wi' a horse o' pride,
  And what should I make wi' a sword so brown,
But spill the rings o' the Gentle Folk
  And flyte my kin in the Fairy Town?

"And what should I make wi' blazon and belt,
  Wi' keep and tail and seizin and fee,
And what should I do wi' page and squire
  That am a king in my own countrie?

"For I send east and I send west,
  And I send as far as my will may flee,
By dawn and dusk and the drinking rain,
  And syne my Sendings return to me.

"They come wi' news of the groanin' earth,
  They come wi' news o' the roarin' sea,
Wi' word of Spirit and Ghost and Flesh,
  And man that's mazed among the three."

The king insists that Thomas should give proof of his skill;—and the proof is given in the true old magical fashion of the ballads—first by a war strain which fills the listener with the passion of battle; then by a love strain, which makes the hearers remember the days of their first affection; then by a sorrowful strain; which makes even the king weep for remembrance of the follies of his youth. Of course this is the same idea that inspired Dryden's great ode "Alexander's Feast;" but the method is that of the glasgerion ballad, quite as effective in a simple way. It is the splendid use of the modified refrain, however, that makes this ballad especially worth reading; and the effects are obtained by the use of obsolete words — not of Scotch words. The following terms,—bent, knowes, wasterel, flyte (to put to scorn), rax, birled, brattled, splent (a kind of mail

armour), eyass (a young hawk), pye (king-fisher), and routed (bowed),—these are not used by Burns, but by Chaucer, with one or two exceptions. The exceptions include the word rax, to wrench out, which is modern dialect. But the fact that I want to emphasize is only this—that the best ballad writer of the present time is no mere ballad-monger but a careful student of old English forms, and especially of the Middle English of Chaucer's time.

CHAPTER IV

SOME NOTES ON POPULAR SONGS

THE subject of songs (and by songs I mean poems made only to be sung, as distinguished from ballads which may be written only to be recited) appears to me to have much significance for students of literature. As for the importance of song in itself I need hardly remind you of the famous statement of a famous man to the effect that he did not care who made the laws of the people if he were allowed to make their songs. That reference is to patriotic songs, songs embodying the national ideals. But other classes of songs may be important in quite another way, in a literary way; and it is of these latter that I should like to talk with you. There is much to be learned from the simple art of many popular songs,—not because such songs represent the work of some one man more gifted than another man, but because they generally represent, in their examples, the work of many minds. What I mean is this;—many of the best European songs did not belong to written literature until the time of one or two generations ago. Before that time they had belonged to what we call oral literature;—everybody knew them by heart, though nobody had written them down. For hundreds of years they had been sung; the parents of one generation teaching them to the children, and so passing them on to the next. When a composition has had a long life of this kind, existing only upon the lips of the people and in their hearts, one thing is sure to happen; namely, that the poem is greatly improved in the course of time. Almost every singer makes a little change in the words to suit himself; and the people who hear him sing criticize at once. But if the change happens to be an

improvement it is likely to become accepted. And that is why the old songs of the people are better than the new ones. They represent a longer experience with the text, and a great deal of sincere criticism, and a great many instinctive improvements. And in every country of Europe the old popular songs are better than the new ones. Very probably this is true of Japan as well, though I am not competent to make the statement.

Unfortunately in regard to the songs most famous in English, the Japanese student must find himself at a serious disadvantage—for the simple reason that the number of popular songs in pure English—in the English of the written language—is very small. Nearly all of the good popular songs—because they are popular songs—happen to be written in some provincial dialect. This is the case with even the songs of Burns; and this is the case with the best songs of Ireland and Wales. English men of letters find great pleasure and profit in the study of such songs; and ladies play them on the piano and sing them at great parties. But all classes are tolerably familiar with some forms of the provincial dialects (but for use in this country it is quite otherwise). We find the dialect a great obstacle. Another fact is that although the English are great poets, they do not seem to be such good song writers as the Celts; they have less vivid emotion; and the best of our so-called English songs have been written by Celts. It is not the same way in other countries in Europe. Everywhere there are dialects of course, but, in France, for example, the difference between ordinary provincial French and literary French is not really so great as the difference between Scotch dialect and English dialect. Some provinces of France, such as Celtic Brittany or the old southern regions may be said to have idioms of their own; also provinces bordering on Germany have peculiar dialects. But in the great body of Central France, the differences are less striking, and are becoming always less with wider education. I do not think that we have in any case any English song of a popular character,

quite so good as the French song. Let me give you one French example. Except in the spelling of the preposition with which the second line begins, there is nothing in the language at all different from ordinary French, and the song is said to belong to the sixteenth century.

En passant par la Lorraine,
  Avecque mes sabots,
J'ai rencontré trois capitaines,
  Avecque mes sabots,
    Dondaine!
  Avecque mes sabots!

J'ai rencontré trois capitaines,
  Avecque mes sabots,
Ils m'ont appelé vilaine,
  Avecque mes sabots, &c.

Ils m'ont appelé vilaine,
  Avecque mes sabots,
Mais je ne suis point si vilaine,
  Avecque mes sabots, &c.

Je ne suis point si vilaine,
  Avecque mes sabots,
Puisque le fils du roi m'aimé,
  Avecque mes sabots, &c.

Puisque le fils du roi m'aimé,
  Avecque mes sabots,
Il m'a donné pour étrenne,
  Avecque mes sabots, &c.

Il m'a donné pour étrenne,
  Avecque mes sabots,
Une bourse d'écus plaine,
  Avecque mes sabots, &c.

Une bourse d'écus plaine,
  Avecque mes sabots,
Un boquet de marjolaine,
  Avecque mes sabots, &c.

Un bouquet de marjolaine,
Avecque mes sabots,
Je l'ai planté dans la plaine.
Avecque mes sabots, &c.

Je l'ai planté dans la plaine,
Avecque mes sabots,
S'il fleurit, je serai reine!
Avecque mes sabots,
Dondaine!
Avecque mes sabots!

(As I was going through Lorraine,
With my wooden shoes,
I met three captains,
With my wooden shoes,
Dondaine!
With my wooden shoes!

I met three captains,
With my wooden shoes,
They called me ugly,
With my wooden shoes, &c.

They called me ugly,
With my wooden shoes,
But I am not so ugly,
With my wooden shoes, &c.

I am not so ugly at all,
With my wooden shoes,
For the son of the King makes love to me,
With my wooden shoes, &c.

Yes, the son of the King makes love to me,
With my wooden shoes,
He has given me for a gift,
With my wooden shoes, &c.

He has given me for a gift,
With my wooden shoes,

A purse full of golden crowns,
With my wooden shoes, &c.

A purse full of golden crowns,
With my wooden shoes.
And a bunch of marjoram,
With my wooden shoes, &c.

A bunch of marjoram,
With my wooden shoes,
I have planted it in the field,
With my wooden shoes, &c.

I have planted it in the field,
With my wooden shoes,
If it blossoms I shall be Queen,
With my wooden shoes,
Dondaine!
With my wooden shoes!)

I think this to be one of the most perfect little songs ever written in any language—perfect as the expression of a very simple incident told in the simplest possible way, with a joyousness, a naïvete that is not at all in English character, a simplicity such as might have existed among those old Greek peasants, among whom Theocritus delighted to dwell. This is the narrative:—

A young peasant goes to the neighboring little town, perhaps for the first time in her life, to buy herself a pair of wooden shoes, sabots, just as a Japanese peasant girl, living in some remote mountain village, might go to the nearest town to buy herself a good pair of "geta." However, you must suppose the French girl to be still more unsophisticated than her far Eastern sisters;—very probably she does not know how to read or write, and her notions of right and wrong are doubtless much looser. Nevertheless she is a very pleasing creature, ready to believe what anybody tells her. When she gets to the little town, after walking all day perhaps, it happens that the king's son notices her

as she passes by. We may imagine the king's son to be something of a scamp, although perhaps a gentleman according to the morals of the time. Anyhow, after the girl bought her wooden shoes, the king's son sends for her, makes love to her, gives her a purse full of gold pieces, and gives her a little bunch of sweet marjoram—a plant sacred to lovers—telling her that if it ever blossoms in her garden, he will come to marry her; then she may expect to be queen some day. And she believes everything he tells her. So she goes back to her mountain village very happy. On the way some soldiers see her and remark how pretty that girl would be if she did not wear those ugly wooden shoes; and they jeer at her a little, pretending to think her ugly. Then she answers them in all her simplicity: "How can I be ugly? I cannot be so ugly as you think, for the king's son—and he ought to know—thinks that I am pretty and loved me: And he gave me all his money, and this marjoram, in spite of my wooden shoes. You do not know—perhaps I shall some day be queen, with my wooden shoes!" What a charming simplicity appears through the whole composition, and what young gaiety, and what merry music!

Perhaps you may say that the little song is not exactly moral. Well, I do not think that this objection ought to be made. If not exactly moral it is not at least immoral—there is nothing wicked in it; it is only a little picture of a life so innocent as not to know what is really right and wrong according to conventional standards. Does not the girl think that it is her duty to please the king's son and does she not believe his promise to marry her when the sweet marjoram blossoms in the garden? That is the way to consider that song. It is a picture not of viciousness at all, but of an innocence so childish as to consider all the world good and everybody true. Even the soldiers who tell her that she is ugly do so only because they did not know that she was loved by the king's son!

French songs of this class never treat love-subjects in the deep sentimental way that they are treated in English

songs. There is no rigid morality about them; and there is no cant. They express either the joy of life or the sadness of death with absolute sincerity,—and if a religious thought appears in them you may be sure that it is just as sincere as expression of the young passions. Nevertheless I cannot wish to underrate English popular songs. They too have their beauty, and their sincerity, though it is something very different. I shall give you an example in the form of a little ballad composed by the Baroness Nairne. Perhaps you would say this, being the work of an educated woman, and woman of rank, does not truly represent the popular songs. But you would be wrong in thinking so. The ballad is simply made up with fragments of old popular songs, and is written in the dialect of the Scotch peasant; and the proof of the truth is that it became popular at once. It represents only a slight literary improvement in construction over the more primitive forms of the same story; and it is written to a popular air. I shall read to you, so far as possible in English—

TUVER HUNTINGTOWER

"When you go away, Jamie,
  When you go away, laddie,
What will you give my heart to cheer,
  When you are far away, Jamie?"

"I'll give you a fine new gown, Jeanie,
  I'll give you a fine new gown, lassie,
And it will be a silken one,
  With Valenciennes trimmed round, Jeanie."

"O, that's no love at all, laddie,
  That's no love at all, Jamie,
How could I bear fine gowns to wear,
  When you are far away, laddie?

"But mind me when away, Jamie
  Mind me when away, laddie,

For out of sight is out of mind
  With many folks we know, Jamie."

"O, that can never be, Jeanie,
  Forget you ne'er can be, lassie;
O, go with me to the north countrie,
  My bonny bride to be, Jennie.

"The hills are grand and high, Jeanie,
  The burnice is running clear, lassie,
'Mong birds and braes, where wild deer strays,
  O, come with me and see, lassie."

"I will not go with you, laddie,
  I told you so before, Jamie;
Till free consent my parents give,
  I cannot go with you, Jamie."

"But when you're wed to me, Jeanie,
  Then they will forgive, lassie;
How can you be so cold to me,
  Who loved you well and long, lassie."

"Not so long as them, laddie,
  Not so long as them, Jamie;
A grief to them I would not be
  Not for the Duke himsel', Jamie.

"We'll save our penny fee, laddie,
  To keep from poor-tithes free, Jamie;
And then their blessing they will give
  Both to you and me, Jamie."

"Huntingtower is mine, lassie,
  Huntingtower is mine, Jeanie,
Huntingtower and Blairnagower,
  And all that 's mine is thine, Jeanie!"

Now in the former song we have the story of a king's son making love to an innocent country girl, who has no idea of guile—in this we have the story of a great nobleman disguising himself as a common peasant not only in order

to win but in order to test a girl of the people. But the Scottish girl is no fool. Probably she is innocent in the best sense; but there is nothing weak about her. She loves the handsome mountain lad and is willing to become his wife, but on condition that her parents approve the marriage; and they will not approve it until he shows that he has money enough to take good care of her. Then he says "Well, I must go away to another country and make some money; and I will send nice presents." Presents do not mean love. No: she does not want his presents; she only wants him to keep his promise to her, to remember her when he is away. He tries once more perhaps for the twentieth time to persuade her to go away secretly with him, then he will certainly marry her. But she answers him that she will never cause her parents a moment's sadness even to please him. "But I have loved you so long—I have loved you so long and well; how can you be so cold-hearted?" She makes him the fine answer. "Neither so long and so well as have my parents loved me. No, we must save our money so as to assure ourselves against want —then our parents will be glad to have us married." If she would have run away with him, he would have despised her;—he was looking for a woman of strong character. And he has found her and then for the first time he tells her who he is,—the lord of all the country round—asking her to become his wife simply because she is good and true. This is a very old subject of English ballad and popular song; and it is founded upon actual fact. You may remember Tennyson took one incident of the same kind for the subject of "The Lord of Burleigh." Many novels have been written about the same thing. Nevertheless, fine as the Scotch song is, I should not think of giving it preference over the French song. There is a simple art about that, a truth of life which cannot be surpassed.

I told you about the skill of the French popular singers in treating sad subjects also. Let me give one example—the story of a dead peasant girl—or, rather the story of the

feeling of the lover who sees her dead. Perhaps she might have been at one time as innocent as the girl who went to buy the wooden shoes. The title of the piece is "La Morte." It is composed by a country poet of great talent, Gabriel Vicaire, who unfortunately became mad and died a few years ago. It is written altogether in the speech of the common people and the idioms are all colloquial. But how very touching it is!

Avant-hier, la pauvre Lise,
Sans crier gare, a trépassé.

Elle est au milieu de l'église
Sur un tréteau qu'on a dressé.

Elle est en face de la Vierge,
Elle qui pécha tant de fois.

A ses pieds fume un petit cierge
Dans un long chandelier de bois.

Les gens qui sortent de confesse
Ont grand'hâte de s'en aller,

Et le curé bâcle sa messe:
Son déjeuner pourrait brûler.

Aux malheureux courte prière;
Ça ne rapporte quasi rien.

Pas un âme autour de la bière;
On dirait qu'on enterre un chien.

Seul, à genoux près de la porte,
Je regarde, et je n'ose entrer.

Je pense aux cheveux de la morte
Que le soleil venait dorer,

A ses yeux bleu de violette,
Si doux alors que je l'aimais,

A sa bouche aujourd'hui muette
Et qui ne rira plus jamais.

(Day before yesterday, without a word, poor Lise died.

She is there in the middle of the church, lying upon the little framework which they made for her.

She is lying there in front of the Virgin,—she who sinned so many times.

At her feet a small taper smokes in a wooden candle stick.

The people who have finished making their confessions seem in a great hurry to get away.

And the priest hurries through his mass—perhaps he is thinking that his breakfast will burn if he does not finish quickly.

Short prayers for the wretched;—praying for such people brings in scarcely any money at all.

And there is not a single soul about the bier;—one would say that it was only a dog that is going to be buried.

I only, on my knees at the door, I look and dare not enter.

I think of her violet-blue eyes—so sweet in the time when I used to love her; I think of her mouth now that will never smile again.)

The young peasant who tells us this does not much like the priest: he understands human nature pretty well; and he knows that the poor dead girl is not receiving the consideration to which true Christianity should entitle her. The priests do not give her case much attention, because she has no rich friend to pay well for the service; and the village folks pay no fees for the funeral at all. Of course she was not a good girl from the religious point of view; but that is no reason for burying her like a dog. He kneels at the door of the church, and is afraid to go in. Why? afraid perhaps of showing his emotions—because he cannot help thinking of the days when he loved her, when she was his mistress. And then, he begins to think about the doctrine of the future life. He does not like the priests; but he believes—he believes in the soul, in heaven and in hell, in Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. And as he believes

he must pray for the girl. First he speaks to her: then he prays for her—and that prayer is one of the most delightful things in modern French literature.

Ah! pauvre belle . . .
. . . . . .

. . . . . Où sont les rêves
Qui noux rendaient le coeur content?
. . . . . .

Tes lèvres, fleurant comme roses,
Où l'amour menait si grand bruit,

Tes lèvres sont a jamais closes;
Tes yeux moqueurs sont dans la nuit.
. . . . . .

Dis-moi, pauvre âme abandonée,
As-tu déjà vu le bon Dieu?

Au puis d'enfer es-tu damnée?
As-tu mis la robe de feu?
. . . . . .

Parle, parle. Est-ce vrai qu'on souffre
Mille morts éternellement?

S'il ne te faut qu'une neuvaine
Pour sortir du mauvais chemin,

Pour vêtir la cape de laine,
Je n'attendrai pas à demain.

Traversant forêts et rivières,
Les pieds saignant, le cœur navré,

A Notre-Dame de Fourvières,
Pénitent noir, je m'en irai.

Bienheureux le pauvre qui touche
Les grains d'or de son chapelet!

Elle peut d'un mot de sa bouche
Nous rendre blancs comme le lait,

Elle peut d'un signe de tète,
Effacer notre iniquité.

Je lui donnerai pour sa fête,
Manteau d'hiver, manteau d'été;

Et, quand viendra la grand foire,
Je veux offrir à son Jésus

Un moulin aux ailes d'ivoire,
Pour qu'il rie en soufflant dessus

(Ah! pretty girl! where are now the dreams which once made us so happy?

. . . . . .

Thy lips once blooming like roses—thy lips which love me so talkative,—

Thy lips are closed forever; they mocking eyes are in the everlasting night.

. . . . . .

Tell me, thou poor forsaken soul, hast thou already seen the good God?

Art thou condemned to the pit of Hell? Hast thou put on the robe of fire?

. . . . . .

Speak to me, speak! Is it true that one suffers a thousand deaths for all eternity?

If thou dost only need a nine days prayer to help thee out of the evil way,

Then, indeed, I shall not wait until to-morrow to put on the woolen robe of a pilgrim.

And as a black penitent I shall go through forests and over rivers, with bleeding feet, and sorrowing heart to our lady of Fourvieres.

Blessed is the person able to touch the golden beads of her rosary!

With a single word of her lips she can make us white as milk.

With one nod she can blot out our iniquity.

For the next festival I will make her a gift of a cloak for winter, and a cloak for summer;

And when the time of the great fair shall come, I intend to offer to her child Jesus

A little wind-mill with ivory vanes that he may laugh as he blows upon it.)

You must understand that the little wind-mill referred to is very much like the Japanese toy called "kazaguruma"; the child turns the wheel by blowing upon it with its breath. Is there not something pathetically delightful in the artlessness of this promised gift to the Virgin's son. Such a poem could only have been imagined in a country of Catholic peasantry; and the sentiment is exactly true to life. The French peasant is hard and keen in mere matters of barter and trade; and he is a quick observer of human nature, but his religious side is as simple as that of a little child; and it is not by any means unattractive on that account.

Well, our English song writers and ballad writers cannot manage for some reason or other, to write things as touching and as artless as this—except when they take to dialect, and even then they appear to be much more artificial than the French. In the whole range of English song literature there are very, very few things that are not somewhat artificial, if we except the pieces written in dialect. I almost believe that we could count the exceptions upon our fingers —that is to say, I doubt if we have ten really fine songs, not written in dialect, and not so literary as to seem artificial. We have Burns of course; but Burns is only great in dialect, and has no value when he expresses himself in ordinary English. In fact there are but two periods in English literature to which we may look for earnest and artless songs of beauty—the old ballad age, and the nineteenth century.

Now going back to the old English period, we find a few popular songs of the true quality—songs which are at once artless and yet beautiful, which possess the universal element of literary excellence without being literary. Such is the little song about the "Cuckoo," the song of "Alisoun,"

and later, the song of "The Nut-Brown Maid"; still later the drinking song in the English language, that wonderful "Back and side go bare, go bare!"—which ushers in like a joyous roundelay the beginning of true English drama. After that the chief singers were the dramatists; and Shakespeare's songs were the best of these. But these were not of a kind to become popular in the sense that I mean. After the beginning of drama the true popular song existed chiefly in dialect. When we come to the nineteenth century there is a revival of the older tastes; but how very imperfect that revival is! There was Moore who wrote hundreds of songs—some very beautiful from a literary point of view, yet mostly artificial, and the expression of a class feeling or a class fashion. There was Sir Walter Scott; he could write and did write great songs; but he wrote them in dialect. I don't think that we have had any great author who was successful in producing a popular song of the finest quality before the time of Charles Kingsley. He wrote about half a dozen,—two or three of which almost immediately became known the whole world over, being translated into many languages including Japanese. That is a proof for you how rare and how precious a perfect song of this kind can be. None of the four great Victorian poets made a really beautiful popular song of the kind that I am referring to—though both Tennyson and Rossetti have shown, in their mastery of ballad form, that under certain circumstances they might have been able to do so. One female poet produced two fine songs. Jean Ingelow (she wrote in English, not in dialect). To-day there is one great song writer, whose songs are now being sung in English camps and upon English ships all around the world—Kipling; but even Kipling persistently writes in dialect. It would seem as if it requires an astonishing amount of courage or an extraordinary combination of favorable conditions, to produce a fine song in common English. There is no such condition in France. French singers write their songs in pure French; and the result is quite as effective as if dialect were used.

Now if you look carefully at the French poem just quoted, you will find that, although every phrase in it is appropriate in the mouth of the peasant, there is nothing to distinguish it from the literary French except the use of the verb "bâcler" in the phrase "le curé bâcle sa messe" (which we might render into English colloquial, "the priest rattles through his mass.") The word is vulgarly popular, but it is pure French. Again the use of the word "quasi," signifying almost, or about, and used in the sense of our colloquial "just about nothing"—that is not used in literary French; but it is not only pure French, but old classical French which has changed its value in the course of centuries. The work is that of a scholar who delighted in listening to the speech of the peasant and studying the art of its use. The best English songs of a popular kind have also been written in a majority of cases by men of some learning. The old drinking song of "Back and side go bare" was probably the work of a country schoolmaster. I think we should understand from the history of such songs that the ability to write them depends altogether upon the ability to sympathize with the common people and to love them.

I shall try to offer you a few of the most note-worthy kinds of English popular songs, but you will perceive that I cannot avoid quoting some in dialect, because the songs not in dialect are so very rare. However, let us take first a song by Jean Ingelow which is not in dialect. It is a marriage song.

LIKE A LAVEROCK IN THE LIFT

It's we two, it's we two, it's we two for aye,
All the world and we two, and Heaven be our stay.
Like a laverock in the lift, sing, O bonny bride!
All the world was Adam once, with Eve by his side.

What's the world, my lass, my love!—what can it do?
I am thine, and thou art mine; life is sweet and new.
If the world have missed the mark, let it stand by,
For we two have gotten leave, and once more we'll try.

There are several other stanzas; the first stanza serving as a burden or chorus to the others. But the song falls short of the first rank: it is only the burden that is really fine, and that preserves the rest. The word "laverock" is northern country English for lark; and the word "lift" meaning "sky," is good old English. A better song is the author's "Long White Seam."

As I came round the harbor buoy,
  The lights began to gleam,
No wave the land-locked water stirred,
  The crags were white as cream;
And I marked my love by candle-light
  Sewing her long white seam.
    It's aye sewing ashore, my dear,
      Watch and steer at sea,
    It's reef and furl, and haul the line,
      Set sail and think of thee.

I climbed to reach her cottage door;
  O sweetly my love sings!
Like a shaft of light her voice breaks forth,
  My soul to meet it springs
As the shining water leaped of old,
  When stirred by angel wings.
    Aye longing to list anew,
      Awake and in my dream,
    But never a song she sang like this,
      Sewing her long white seam.

Fair fall the lights, the harbor lights,
  That brought me in to thee,
And peace drop down on that low roof
  For the sight that I did see,
And the voice, my dear, that rang so clear
  All for the love of me.
    For O, for O, with brows bent low
      By the candle's flickering gleam,
    Her wedding gown it was she wrought,
      Sewing the long white seam.

This is a good song and yet there is something wanting in it,—the artless ease of the true popular song is missing in several lines. Still it is good; it makes a charming picture to the mind. I suppose you know the scriptural allusion to the stirring of waters of the healing pool by the wings of an angel. Perhaps you will wonder at the very fine line describing the crags as being "white as cream." Are crags white, even in moonlight? Yes, they are—in England. The singer is describing the chalk-cliff at the mouth of the bay. But just because of the particular features of this song it lacks that tone of universal charm which we should ask for in a truly great song. Very much better, incomparably better, are the three songs of Kingsley—"The Three Fishers," "The Sands of Dee," and "Airly Beacon." Perhaps the last is least known to you: we may quote it, for it is very short.

AIRLY BEACON

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;
  Oh, the pleasant sight to see
Shires and towns from Airly Beacon,
  While my love climbed up to me!

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;
  Oh, the happy hours we lay
Deep in fern on Airly Beacon,
  Courting through the summer's day!

Airly Beacon, Airly Beacon;
  Oh, the weary haunt for me,
All alone on Airly Beacon,
  With his baby on my knee!

Here the place signifies nothing, the country signifies nothing, the nationality signifies nothing; the truth and the pathos are of the universal kind, translatable into the language of all countries and the emotion of all hearts. That is a very great song—a song of the first and most

perfect, considering its brevity. Indeed the brevity is one of its marvellous qualities; the feat of expressing the joy and the sorrow of a whole life in twelve lines is not small. I think there is nothing to explain—further than to say that Airly Beacon is the name of a Scotch hill, upon which summit a beacon light used to be lighted. The rest of the story tells itself. You know that the word "shires" signifies in England about the same thing that the word "kuni" signifies in Japan.

We find nothing more to compare with Kingsley's songs, in the whole of the nineteenth century:—we must go back to the eighteenth century for that, and to the time of Burns. I do not like to quote Burns to you because of his dialect; but there is one peice so very much resembling in its charm the song of Kingsley that I think we had better quote it. Translated into Japanese, I think you would find it beautiful. The subject is sad like the subject of Kingsley's song. I shall read the verses as far as possible in English—though the charm to English readers is much related to the dialect.

Ye flowery banks of bonnie Doon,
  How can ye bloom so fair!
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
  And I so full of care!

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
  That sings upon the bough;
Thou minds me of the happy days,
  When my false love was true.

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
  That sings beside thy mate;
For so I sat, and so I sang,
  And wist not of my fate.

Oft I have rov'd by bonnie Doon,
  To see the woodbine twine,
And every bird sang of its love,
  And so did I of mine.

With lightsome heart I pulled a rose
  Upon its thorny tree;
But my false lover stole the rose,
  And left the thorn with me.

I suppose you know this is very famous. It has the great quality of sincerity and simple beauty. I like Kingsley's "Airly Beacon" much better;—I think it is a higher piece of art. But the song of Burns is also beautiful; and he wrote a great many beautiful songs.

But if there is in the nineteenth century no great English songs of the popular kind to equal the songs of Kingsley, there are some songs of lesser quality which possess very considerable merit. One of these little songs, made in the pre-Victorian era by "Father Prout," about the sound of the bell in his native town is now sung all over the world. His real name was Francis Mahony; and he wrote many clever things, but nothing really famous except this one song. In the time of Moore and Byron it was one of the great treats at a social meeting to hear the old Irishman sing this one song. It is called "The Shandon Bells." But the cathedral really referred to is in the city of Cork; and many persons now visit Cork merely to hear the bells, remembering that song. I do not offer this song as a great literary composition; it is strictly a popular song; and all the better for any faults that it may happen to possess in regard to construction.

With deep affection,
And recollection,
I often think of
    Those Shandon bells,
Whose sounds so wild would,
In the days of childhood,
Fling round my cradle
    Their magic spells.
On this I ponder
Where'er I wander,
And thus grow fonder,

Sweet Cork, of thee;
With thy bells of Shandon,
That sound so grand on
The pleasant waters
Of the River Lee.

I've heard bells chiming
Full many a clime in,
Tolling sublime in
Cathedral shrine,
While at a glib rate
Brass tongues would vibrate—
But all their music
Spoke nought like thine;
For memory, dwelling
On each proud swelling
Of the belfry knelling
Its bold notes free,
Made the bells of Shandon
Sound far more grand on
The pleasant waters
Of the River Lee.

I've heard bells tolling
Old "Adrian's Mole" in,
Their thunder rolling
From the Vatican,
And cymbals glorious
Swinging uproarious
In the gorgeous turrets
Of Notre Dame;
But thy sounds were sweeter
Than the dome of Peter
Flings o'er the Tiber,
Pealing solemnly—
O! the bells of Shandon
Sound far more grand on
The pleasant waters
Of the River Lee.

There's a bell in Moscow,

While on tower and kiosk O!
In Saint Sophia
    The Turkman gets,
And loud in air
Calls men to prayer
From the tapering summits
    Of tall minarets.
Such empty phantom
I freely grant them;
But there 's an anthem
    More dear to me,—
'Tis the bells of Shandon,
That sound so grand on
The pleasant waters
    Of the River Lee.

A few explanations are needed. This man has travelled in Europe, and has heard the most famous bells of the Western world; but none of them sound so sweetly to his ears as the sound of the bells of his native town. The reference in the second stanza is to Rome. "Adrian's Mole" or more correctly spelt "Hadrian's Mole" is the name of the mausoleum of Rome constructed by Emperor Hadrian, a vast earthwork upon which many buildings now rest. The Vatican, you know, is the Pope's residence, adjoining the great cathedral of St. Peter's, where there are wonderful bells. Next we have reference to the bells of Notre Dame, the great cathedral of Paris; bells of which the sound has been made famous by Victor Hugo's novel of "Notre-Dame." The bell of Moscow, referred to, used to be considered the greatest bell in the world, until the great bells of China became known. The Moscow bell is useless, you know, having fallen by a fire and having broken. The reference to St. Sophia in Constantinople is correct, it must not be misunderstood. The building was constructed by the Emperor Justinian the Greek, and was once the greatest cathedral of the Christian world. But when the Turks captured the city they changed the cathedral into a mosque; although Western people still call it improperly St. Sophia, it is only

known in history by such a name, correctly speaking. In all Mohammedan countries the prayer is made to by singing, not by bells; and the use of the bells was forbidden by Mohammed. But the poet is a little unjust in speaking of the calls to the Mohamedan prayer as an "empty phantom." It is one of the most impressive and beautiful chants possible to hear; and one of the most pleasant experiences of Constantinople is to hear the singing of the summons to the prayer by the muezzin of the great mosque. A muezzin is always chosen for his splendid voice. Three times a day that voice rings all over the city, strongly as the sound of a great trumpet, but a phantom with tones of gold that pleases a musical ear.

The song of the bells of Shandon, remember, is in colloquial English and the colloquialism is playful—therefore we have the word "uproarious" in relation to the bells of Notre Dame. Of course this is not intended to be serious, only to express the indifference to the sound of any bells except those of his native city. Colloquial or not, however, it is a fine composition, and will probably give pleasure to lovers of literature for many years to come.

I have given examples of popular songs of love and sorrow and a good song on the subject of bells. What do you think of war as a subject for popular song? Perhaps you will say that it is not exactly suited to such forms of verse. But I am not sure about that: remember some of the Japanese songs upon the subject of the war with China. One or two of them are really popular, and yet full of spirit and full of irony. A popular song is best when ironical; and we have such songs in Scotch dialects that you can appreciate. It is about the battle of Killiecrankie. The battle of Killiecrankie was the last great battle fought between the English and the Scotch and it was one of the most remarkable battles in the world; because, on one side, there were 6,000 veteran English soldiers, who had fought in England on many fields of battle and who were supported by artillery—while on the other side there were only Scotch mountain peasants armed with nothing but the claymores, as you

read in Macaulay's "History of England." It lasted only about twenty minutes. The Scotch mountaineers, undismayed by the first volley of the soldiers, leapt down upon them from the mountain side and literally cut them all to pieces. Had not the leader, Dundee, been killed in the charge, the host of the Highlanders would not have melted away. It was so splendid a feat on the part of the peasants that all the poets of the time wrote something about it. Much as Dr. Johnson hated Scotchmen, he wrote a Latin poem on that battle. At a later date Wordsworth wrote a sonnet about it. And there have been many other poems on it during the nineteenth century. But none of these can compare for a moment with the thorough irony of a song made by the peasants themselves. Burns found the song and tried to reshape two stanzas; but critics have disapproved of the change. Really we do not know the name of the man who composed the song; but he was probably one of the very men who took part in the battle. This time I must give the dialect—the raw strength of the thing is there.

Whare ha'e ye been sae braw, lad?
  Where ha'e ye been sae brankie, O?
O, whare ha'e ye been sae braw, lad?
  Cam ye by Killiecrankie, O?
    An ye had been whare I ha'e been,
      Ye wadna been so cantie, O;
    An' ye had seen what I ha'e seen,
      I' the braes o' Killiecrankie, O.

I faught at land, I faught at sea,
  At hame I fought my auntie, O;
But I met the devil an' Dundee,
  On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O;
    An ye had been, &c.

The bauld Pitcur fell in a furr,
  An' Clavers got a clankie, O;
Or I had fed an Athol gled,
  On the braes o' Killiecrankie, O.
    It's nae shame, it's nae shame,

It's nae shame to shank ye, O;
There's sour slaes on Athol braes,
And devils at Killiecrankie, O!

"Where have you been that you look so handsome to-day? Where have you been that you look so sprightly? Where have you been that you look so handsome, my boy? Did you have to come here by way of Killiecrankie?

"O if you had been where I have been, you would never look so lively,—not if you had seen what I had seen on the plains of Killiecrankie.

"I fought both on land and on sea. At home I often fought with my aunt (the mother's sister is often a cause of quarrels in Scotch house-holds); but on the fields of Killiecrankie I met the devil himself with Dundee.

"Old bold Pitcur fell into a furrow and Clavers got a hard knock (he was shot dead in the front of the battle)—if it had not been for that I should have been food for the kites of Athol. It is no shame—it is no shame—it is no shame to run away;—there's sour berries on the field of Athol and devils at Killiecrankie."

Of course in plain English the homely force of the thing, the rough mockery, is almost entirely lost. And indeed the great worth of the piece is not less due to the music than to the sarcasm. It is sung to one of the livliest tunes ever composed; and to understand the stirring effect of the song upon modern Scotch regiments (they go into battle playing "In Killiecrankie"), you should hear the air played upon highland bag-pipes.

Going back through all English literature from the time of the Killiecrankie composition we can find no really popular song, having the qualities of first class merit combined with universal interest. There are literary songs in multitude; but they belong to lyrical poetry proper—not to the subject of this essay. On the other hand there are many dialect poems,—dialect songs of the highest class; but the fact of their being in dialect restricts them to a narrow place. I do not know whether we can really speak

of any other great songs, popular songs, in pure English till we come to the time of Shakespeare and a little before. In that time a number of small popular lyrics made their appearance, which you all know something about; yet, except as poetry they are mostly dead—which is proof that from the very beginning the true kind of life was not in them. A drinking song alone survives, which is actually still sung; that is a proof of its great merit. The earliest date manuscript of this song is not perhaps the best; but because it is the earliest to which a date can be appended with some certainty it is better to quote it. It must have been composed, if the author is known, some time between 1565 and 1600. In that case the author was a bishop—John Still, Bishop of Bath and Wells. It is rather strange in these times to think of a bishop writing a popular drinking song; but the bishops of old were not ascetics invariably. It is possible that the Bishop only rewrote the song after some older copy; and a version published by Bullen in his "Lyrics from the Elizabethan Dramatists" (in the appendix) is thought to be the older. However, I offer the version given in the latest Oxford Anthology as the work of Bishop Still.

JOLLY GOOD ALE AND OLD

I cannot eat but little meat,
  My stomach is not good;
But sure I think that I can drink
  With him that wears a hood.
Though I go bare, take ye no care,
  I nothing am a-cold;
I stuff my skin so full within
  Of jolly good ale and old.
    Back and side go bare, go bare;
    Both foot and hand go cold;
    But, belly, God send thee good ale enough,
    Whether it be new or old.

I love no roast but a nut-brown toast,

And a crab laid in the fire;
A little bread shall do me stead;
Much bread I not desire.
No frost nor snow, no wind, I trow,
Can hurt me if I wold;
I am so wrapp'd and throughly lapp'd
Of jolly good ale and old.
Back and side go bare, go bare, &c.

And Tib, my wife, that as her life
Loveth well good ale to seek,
Full oft drinks she till ye may see
The tears run down her cheek:
Then doth she trowl to me the bowl
Even as a maltworm should,
And saith, 'Sweetheart, I took my part
Of this jolly good ale and old.'
Back and side go bare, go bare, &c.

Now let them drink till they nod and wink,
Even as good fellows should do;
They shall not miss to have the bliss
Good ale doth bring men to;
And all poor souls that have scour'd bowls
Or have them lustily troll'd,
God save the lives of them and their wives,
Whether they be young or old.
Back and side go bare, go bare;
Both foot and hand go cold;
But, belly, God send thee good ale enough,
Whether it be new or old.

Professor Saintsbury calls this "a magnificent song." It is indeed the very best drinking song in the English language, though I must say that I prefer the longer version in Bullen which has three more stanzas and is more curiously written and spelt, for example:

But yf that I
May have trwly
Good ale my belly full

I shall looke lyke one
By swete sainte Johnn
Were shoron agaynste the woole.

I advise you to look at the version I speak of. But perhaps you may wonder why not only Professor Saintsbury but almost every great critic has praised this song. Is it not vulgar, rough, devil-may-care? It faithfully represents the feeling of jollity of a particular class at a particular time; and if you could hear it sung to-day in London, as it sometimes is by a crowd of sturdy workman over their evening pot of ale, you would feel that there is a plenty of spirit and force in it. The great merit of the song is in what we call the rhythmic swing, which renders it admirably adapted for a rolling chorus of many voices. And this swing has been obtained of an admirable use of double rhymes. Of course you should remember that when this song was composed the English language was not pronounced altogether as it is now: indeed it is from this song that the philologist has been able to determine the sixteenth century accentuation and meaning of certain words. But I do not mean to call this song of the very highest class among popular songs. It is the very highest class of English drinking songs. But that is all. It has not got the world-quality which some of Kingsley's songs have got and it cannot rank with them. It is only a wonderful thing of its own kind.

I am not going to offer you any more examples of songs; indeed I doubt whether I could find any capable of illustrating the facts I wanted to bring out. In six or seven anthologies of lyric poetry, in two anthologies of musical songs, and in a number of other books I have searched untiringly for songs of the first quality, in pure English; and they do not exist. The result has been not merely to show that nearly all of the good English popular songs are in dialect, but that a song not in dialect, and yet holding the quality of universal interest, is one of the rarest and most precious things in literature. If Kingsley has no other claim, he would be still famous for all time through having

been able to write a few songs capable of being translated into any language under the sun. By the way, I did think that I had discovered a very great song, or was going to discover it, called "The Men of the Sea." I found some verses of it in a novel by Kipling where they were quoted as if taken from some ancient source; and I made inquiries in all directions hoping to secure the original. Nobody could find it. At last Mr. Kipling sent word that he had composed the verses out of his own head. All that now remains for me to say is this,—that if Mr. Kipling will ever take the time and pains to complete that song, he will have made one of the best songs ever written in any language:—a real world-song. But perhaps he will not ever be able to finish it. Such power does not come to a man by study,—it can come only as an inspiration.

A word in conclusion as to books about songs in English. The best anthology of songs with music for the student is the little collection in the Golden Treasury series called "The Song Book" edited by John Hullah. But you will find that the value of the book is chiefly musical and that such famous songs as "Aileen Aroon" "Robert Adais," "Home, Home" etc., live chiefly through the extraordinary beat of the tunes attached to them. Of course you will find songs of the highest merit such as "Auld Lang Syne," and "Comin thro the Rye." But these are in dialect. There are many collections of music; and you can look through them for months without finding anything like a great song. A great song not in dialect is sure to be in one of the best anthologies. But how many such songs does any anthology contain? Finally I may mention that there is a new book called "Stories of Famous Songs," published by an Englishman Fitzgerald. It is of very little value from a literary point of view,—for it does not give the text of the songs at all, but only relates many extraordinary stories concerning their authorship; moreover, English songs occupy only about one chapter of the book, the greater part of which is taken up with stories about songs of other countries. So that

even literature on the subject of this essay is very scanty. But that is only a proof of what I have been trying to tell you all along,—namely that there is nothing so rare as a good popular song. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that even great epics are more plentiful. We think often of things as unimportant because they are small, and sometimes forget the parable of the diamond.

CHAPTER V

THE IDEAL WOMAN IN ENGLISH POETRY

As I gave already in this class a lecture on the subject of love poetry, you will easily understand that the subject of the present lecture is not exactly love. It is rather about love's imagining of perfect character and perfect beauty. The part of it to which I think your attention could be deservedly given is that relating to the imagined wife of the future, for this is a subject little treated of in Eastern poetry. It is a very pretty subject. But in Japan and other countries of the East almost every young man knows beforehand whom he is likely to marry. Marriage is arranged by the family: it is a family matter, indeed a family duty and not a romantic pursuit. At one time, very long ago, in Europe, marriages were arranged in much the same way. But nowadays it may be said in general that no young man in England or America can even imagine whom he will marry. He has to find his wife for himself; and he has nobody to help him; and if he makes a mistake, so much the worse for him. So to Western imagination the wife of the future is a mystery, a romance, an anxiety—something to dream about and to write poetry about.

This little book that I hold in my hand is now very rare. It is out of print, but it is worth mentioning to you because it is the composition of an exquisite man of letters, Frederick Locker-Lampson, best of all nineteenth century writers of society verse. It is called "Patchwork." Many years ago the author kept a kind of journal in which he wrote down or copied all the most beautiful or most curious things which he had heard or which he had found in books.

Only the best things remained, so the value of the book is his taste in selection. Whatever Locker-Lampson pronounced good, the world now knows to have been exactly what he pronounced, for his taste was very fine. And in this book I find a little poem quoted from Mr. Edwin Arnold, now Sir Edwin. Sir Edwin Arnold is now old and blind, and he has not been thought of kindly enough in Japan, because his work has not been sufficiently known. Some people have even said his writings did harm to Japan, but I want to assure you that such statements are stupid lies. On the contrary he did for Japan whatever good the best of his talent as a poet and the best of his influence as a great journalist could enable him to do. But to come back to our subject: when Sir Edwin was a young student he had his dreams about marriage like other young English students, and he put one of them into verse, and that verse was at once picked out by Frederick Locker-Lampson for his little book of gems. Half a century has passed since then; but Locker-Lampson's judgment remains good, and I am going to put this little poem first because it so well illustrates the subject of the lecture. It is entitled "A Ma Future."

Where waitest thou,
Lady, I am to love? Thou comest not,
Thou knowest of my sad and lonely lot—
I looked for thee ere now!

It is the May,
And each sweet sister soul hath found its brother,
Only we two seek fondly each the other,
And seeking still delay.

Where art thou, sweet?
I long for thee as thirsty lips for streams,
O gentle promised angel of my dreams,
Why do we never meet?

Thou art as I,
Thy soul doth wait for mine as mine for thee;
We cannot live apart, must meeting be
Never before we die?

Dear soul, not so,
For time doth keep for us some happy years,
And God hath portion'd us our smiles and tears,
Thou knowest, and I know.

Therefore I bear
This winter-tide as bravely as I may,
Patiently waiting for the bright spring day
That cometh with thee, dear.

'Tis the May light
That crimsons all the quiet college gloom,
May it shine softly in thy sleeping room,
And so, dear wife, good night.

This is, of course, addressed to the spirit of the unknown future wife. It is pretty, though it is only the work of a young student. But some two hundred years before, another student—a very great student, Richard Crashaw,—had a fancy of the same kind, and made verses about it which are famous. You will find parts of his poem about the imaginary wife in the ordinary anthologies, but not all of it, for it is very long. I will quote those verses which seem to me the best.

WISHES

Whoe'er she be—
That not impossible She
That shall command my heart and me:

Where'er she lie,
Lock'd up from mortal eye
In shady leaves of destiny:

Till that ripe birth
Of studied Fate stand forth,
And teach her fair steps to our earth:

Till that divine
Idea take a shrine
Of crystal flesh, through which to shine:

Meet you her, my Wishes,
Bespeak her to my blisses,
And be ye call'd my absent kisses.

The poet is supposing that the girl whom he is to marry may not as yet even have been born, for though men in the world of scholarship can marry only late in life, the wife is generally quite young. Marriage is far away in the future for the student, therefore these fancies. What he means to say in short is about like this:

"Oh, my wishes, go out of my heart and look for the being whom I am destined to marry — find the soul of her, whether born or yet unborn, and tell that soul of the love that is waiting for it." Then he tries to describe the imagined woman he hopes to find:

I wish her Beauty,
That owes not all its duty
To gaudy tire, or glist'ring shoe-tie:

Something more than
Taffata or tissue can,
Or rampant feather, or rich fan.

More than the spoil
Of shop or silkworm's toil,
Or a bought blush, or a set smile.

A Face, that's best
By its own beauty drest,
And can alone commend the rest.

A Face, made up
Out of no other shop
Than what Nature's white hand sets ope.

A Cheek, where grows
More than a morning rose,

Which to no box his being owes.

. . . . .

Eyes, that displace
The neighbour diamond, and outface
That sunshine by their own sweet grace.

Tresses, that wear
Jewels but to declare
How much themselves more precious are.

. . . . .

Smiles, that can warm
The blood, yet teach a charm,
That chastity shall take no harm.

. . . . .

Life, that dares send
A challenge to his end,
And when it comes, say, "Welcome, friend!"

There is much more, but the best of the thoughts are here. They are not exactly new thoughts, nor strange thoughts, but they are finely expressed in a strong and simple way.

There is another composition on the same subject—the imaginary spouse, the destined one. But this is written by a woman, Christina Rossetti.

SOMEWHERE OR OTHER

Somewhere or other there must surely be
  The face not seen, the voice not heard,
The heart that not yet—never yet—ah me!
  Made answer to my word.

Somewhere or other, may be near or far;
  Past land and sea, clean out of sight;
Beyond the wandering moon, beyond the star
  That tracks her night by night.

Somewhere or other, may be far or near;
  With just a wall, a hedge, between;

With just the last leaves of the dying year
  Fallen on a turf grown green.

And that turf means of course the turf of a grave in the churchyard. This poem expresses fear that the destined one never can be met, because death may come before the meeting time. All through the poem there is the suggestion of an old belief that for every man and for every woman there must be a mate, yet that it is a chance whether the mate will ever be found.

You observe that all of these are ghostly poems, whether prospective or retrospective. Here is another prospective poem:

AMATURUS

Somewhere beneath the sun,
  These quivering heart-strings prove it,
Somewhere there must be one
  Made for this soul, to move it;
Some one that hides her sweetness
  From neighbours whom she slights,
Nor can attain completeness,
  Nor give her heart its rights;
Some one whom I could court
  With no great change of manner,
Still holding reason's fort,
  Though waving fancy's banner;
A lady, not so queenly
  As to disdain my hand,
Yet born to smile serenely
  Like those that rule the land;
Noble, but not too proud;
  With soft hair simply folded,
And bright face crescent-browed
  And throat by Muses moulded,

. . . . .

Keen lips, that shape soft sayings
  Like crystals of the snow,
With pretty half-betrayings

Of things one may not know;
Fair hand, whose touches thrill,
Like golden rod of wonder,
Which Hermes wields at will
Spirit and flesh to sunder.

. . . .

Forth, Love, and find this maid,
Wherever she be hidden:
Speak, Love, be not afraid,
But plead as thou art bidden;
And say, that he who taught thee
His yearning want and pain,
Too dearly, dearly bought thee
To part with thee in vain.

These lines are by the author of that exquisite little book "Ionica"—a book about which I hope to talk to you in another lecture. His real name was William Cory, and he was long the headmaster of an English public school, during which time he composed and published anonymously the charming verses which have made him famous—modelling his best work in close imitation of the Greek poets. A few expressions in these lines need explanation. For instance, the allusion to Hermes and his rod. I think you know that Hermes is the Greek name of the same god whom the Romans called Mercury, — commonly represented as a beautiful young man, naked and running quickly, having wings attached to the sandals upon his feet. Runners used to pray to him for skill in winning foot races. But this god had many forms and many attributes, and one of his supposed duties was to bring the souls of the dead into the presence of the king of Hades. So you will see some pictures of him standing before the throne of the king of the Dead, and behind him a long procession of shuddering ghosts. He is nearly always pictured as holding in his hands a strange sceptre called the *caduceus*, a short staff about which two little serpents are coiled, and at the top of which is a tiny pair of wings. This is the golden rod re-

ferred to by the poet; when Hermes touched anybody with it, the soul of the person touched was obliged immediately to leave the body and follow after him. So it is a very beautiful stroke of art in this poem to represent the touch of the hand of great love as having the magical power of the golden rod of Hermes. It is as if the poet were to say: "Should she but touch me, I know that my spirit would leap out of my body and follow after her." Then there is the expression "crescent-browed." It means only having beautifully curved eyebrows—arched eyebrows being considered particularly beautiful in Western countries.

Now we will consider another poem of the ideal. What we have been reading referred to ghostly ideals, to memories, or to hopes. Let us now see how the poets have talked about realities. Here is a pretty thing by Thomas Ashe. It is entitled "Pansie;" and this flower name is really a corruption of a French word "pensée," meaning a thought. The flower is very beautiful, and its name is sometimes given to girls, as in the present case.

MEET WE NO ANGELS, PANSIE?

Came, on a Sabbath noon, my sweet,
  In white, to find her lover;
The grass grew proud beneath her feet,
  The green elm-leaves above her:—
    Meet we no angels, Pansie?

She said, "We meet no angels now;"
  And soft lights stream'd upon her:
And with white hand she touch'd a bough;
  She did it that great honour:—
    What! meet no angels, Pansie?

O sweet brown hat, brown hair, brown eyes,
  Down-dropp'd brown eyes, so tender!
Then what said I? Gallant replies
  Seem flattery, and offend her:—
    But meet no angels, Pansie?

The suggestion is obvious, that the maiden realizes to the lover's eye the ideal of an angel. As she comes he asks her slyly,—for she has been to the church—"Is it true that nobody ever sees real angels?" She answers innocently, thinking him to be in earnest, "No—long ago people used to see angels, but in these times no one ever sees them." He does not dare tell her how beautiful she seems to him; but he suggests much more than admiration by the tone of his protesting response to her answer: "What! You cannot mean to say that there are no angels now?" Of course that is the same as to say, "I see an angel now"—but the girl is much too innocent to take the real and flattering meaning.

Wordsworth's portrait of the ideal woman is very famous; it was written about his own wife, though that fact would not be guessed from the poem. The last stanza is the most famous, but we had better quote them all.

She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleam'd 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.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A Spirit, yet a Woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveller betwixt life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect Woman, nobly plann'd,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.

I quoted this after the "Pansie" poem to show you how much more deeply Wordsworth could touch the same subject. To him, too, the first apparition of the ideal maiden seemed angelic; like Ashe he could perceive the mingled attraction of innocence and of youth. But innocence and youth are by no means all that make up the best attributes of woman; character is more than innocence and more than youth, and it is character that Wordsworth studies. But in the last verse he tells us that the angel is always there, nevertheless, even when the good woman becomes old. The angel is the Mother-soul.

Wordsworth's idea that character is the supreme charm was expressed very long before him by other English poets, notably by Thomas Carew.

He that loves a rosy cheek,
  Or a coral lip admires,
Or from star-like eyes doth seek
  Fuel to maintain his fires:
As old Time makes these decay,
So his flames must waste away.

But a smooth and steadfast mind,
  Gentle thoughts and calm desires,
Hearts with equal love combined,
  Kindle never-dying fires.
Where these are not, I despise
Lovely cheeks or lips or eyes.

For about three hundred years in English literature it was the fashion—a fashion borrowed from the Latin poets—to speak of love as a fire or flame, and you must understand the image in these verses in that signification. To-day the fashion is not quite dead, but very few poets now follow it.

Byron himself, with all his passion and his affected scorn of ethical convention, could and did, when he pleased, draw beautiful portraits of moral as well as physical attraction. These stanzas are famous; they paint for us a person with equal attraction of body and mind.

She walks in beauty, like the night
  Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
  Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
  Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
  Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
  Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
  How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
  So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
  But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
  A heart whose love is innocent!

It is worth noticing that in each of the last three poems, the physical beauty described is that of dark eyes and hair. This may serve to remind you that there are two distinct types, opposite types, of beauty celebrated by English poets; and the next poem which I am going to quote, the beautiful "Ruth" of Thomas Hood, also describes a dark woman.

She stood breast-high amid the corn,
Clasp'd by the golden light of morn,
Like the sweetheart of the sun,
Who many a glowing kiss had won.

On her cheek an autumn flush,
Deeply ripen'd;—such a blush
In the midst of brown was born,
Like red poppies grown with corn.

Round her eyes her tresses fell,
Which were blackest none could tell,
But long lashes veil'd a light,
That had else been all too bright.

And her hat, with shady brim,
Made her tressy forehead dim;—
Thus she stood amid the stooks,
Praising God with sweetest looks:—

Sure, I said, Heav'n did not mean,
Where I reap thou shouldst but glean,
Lay thy sheaf adown and come,
Share my harvest and my home.

We might call this the ideal of a peasant girl whose poverty appeals to the sympathy of all who behold her. The name of the poem is suggested indeed by the Bible story of Ruth the gleaner, but the story in the poem is only that of a rich farmer who marries a very poor girl, because of her beauty and her goodness. It is just a charming picture—a picture of the dark beauty which is so much admired in Northern countries, where it is less common than in Southern Europe. There are beautiful brown-skinned types; and the flush of youth on the cheeks of such a brown girl has been compared to the red upon a ripe peach or a russet apple—a hard kind of apple, very sweet and juicy, which is brown instead of yellow, or reddish brown. But the poet makes the comparison with poppy flowers and wheat. That, of course, means golden yellow and red; in

English wheat fields red poppy flowers grow in abundance. The expression "tressy forehead" in the second line of the fourth stanza means a forehead half covered with falling, loose hair.

The foregoing pretty picture may be offset by a charming poem of Browning's describing a lover's pride in his illusion. It is simply entitled "Song," and to appreciate it you must try to understand the mood of a young man who believes that he has actually realized his ideal, and that the woman that he loves is the most beautiful person in the whole world. The fact that this is simply imagination on his part does not make the poem less beautiful—on the contrary, the false imagining is just what makes it beautiful, the youthful emotion of a moment being so humanly and frankly described. Such a youth must imagine that every one else sees and thinks about the girl just as he does, and he expects them to confess it.

Nay but you, who do not love her,
  Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
  Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

Because, you spend your lives in praising;
  To praise, you search the wide world over;
Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
  If earth holds aught—speak truth—above her?
Above this tress, and this, I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

You see the picture, I think,—probably some artist's studio for a background. She sits or stands there with her long hair loosely flowing down to her feet like a river of gold; and her lover, lifting up some of the long tresses in his hand, asks his friend, who stands by, to notice how beautiful such hair is. Perhaps the girl was having her picture painted. One would think so from the question, "Since

your business is to look for beautiful things, why can you not honestly acknowledge that this woman is the most beautiful thing in the whole world?" Or we might imagine the questioned person to be a critic by profession as well as an artist. Like the preceding poem this also is a picture. But the next poem, also by Browning, is much more than a picture—it is very profound indeed, simple as it looks. An old man is sitting by the dead body of a young girl of about sixteen. He tells us how he secretly loved her, as a father might love a daughter, as a brother might love a sister. But he would have wished, if he had not been so old, and she so young, to love her as a husband. He never could have her in this world, but why should he not hope for it in the future world? He whispers into her dead ear his wish, and he puts a flower into her dead hand, thinking, "When she wakes up, in another life, she will see that flower, and remember what I said to her, and how much I loved her." That is the mere story. But we must understand that the greatness of the love expressed in the poem is awakened by an ideal of innocence and sweetness and goodness, and the affection is of the soul—that is to say, it is the love of beautiful character, not the love of a beautiful face only, that is expressed.

EVELYN HOPE

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead!
  Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
  She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass;
  Little has yet been changed, I think:
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
  Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

Sixteen years old when she died!
  Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;
It was not her time to love; beside,
  Her life had many a hope and aim,

Duties enough and little cares,
  And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
  And the sweet white brow is all of her.

Is it too late, then, Evelyn Hope?
  What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
  Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
And, just because I was thrice as old
  And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
  We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

No, indeed! for God above
  Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love:
  I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
  Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:
Much is to learn, much to forget
  Ere the time be come for taking you.

But the time will come,—at last it will,
  When, Evelyn Hope, what meant, I shall say,
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
  That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
  And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what you would do with me, in fine,
  In the new life come in the old one's stead.

I have lived, I shall say, so much since then,
  Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
  Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
  Either I missed or itself missed me:
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
  What is the issue? let us see!

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while!

My heart seemed full as it could hold—
There was space and to spare for the frank young smile
And the red young mouth and the hair's young gold.
So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep—
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand.
There, that is our secret! go to sleep;
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

No other poet has written so many different kinds of poems on this subject as Browning; and although I cannot quote all of them, I must not neglect to make a just representation of the variety. Here is another example: the chief idea is again the beauty of truthfulness and fidelity, but the artistic impression is quite different.

A simple ring with a single stone,
To the vulgar eye no stone of price:
Whisper the right word, that alone—
Forth starts a sprite, like fire from ice.
And lo, you are lord (says an Eastern scroll)
Of heaven and earth, lord whole and sole
Through the power in a pearl.

A woman ('tis I this time that say)
With little the world counts worthy praise:
Utter the true word out and away
Escapes her soul; I am wrapt in blaze,
Creation's lord, of heaven and earth
Lord whole and sole—by a minute's birth—
Through the love in a girl!

Paraphrased, the meaning will not prove as simple as the verses:—Here is a finger ring set with one small stone, one jewel. It is a very cheap-looking stone to common eyes. But if you know a certain magical word, and, after putting the ring on your finger, you whisper that magical word over the cheap-looking stone, suddenly a spirit, a demon or a genie, springs from that gem like a flash of fire miraculously issuing from a lump of ice. And that spirit or genie has power to make you king of the whole world and of the

sky above the world, lord of the spirits of heaven and earth and air and fire. Yet the stone is only a pearl—and it can make you lord of the universe. That is the old Arabian story. The word "scroll" here means a manuscript, an Arabian manuscript.

But what is after all the happiness of mere power? There is a greater happiness possible than to be lord of heaven and earth; that is the happiness of being truly loved. Here is a woman; to the eye of the world, to the sight of other men, she is not very beautiful nor at all remarkable in any way. She is just an ordinary woman, as the pearl in the ring is to all appearances just a common pearl. But let the right word be said, let the soul of that woman be once really touched by the magic of love, and what a revelation! As the spirit in the Arabian story sprang from the stone of the magical ring, when the word was spoken, so from the heart of this woman suddenly her soul displays itself in shining light. And the man who loves, instantly becomes, in the splendour of that light, verily the lord of heaven and earth; to the eyes of the being who loves him he is a god.

The legend is the legend of Solomon—not the Solomon of the Bible, but the much more wonderful Solomon of the Arabian story-teller. His power is said to have been in a certain seal ring, upon which the mystical name of Allah, or at least one of the ninety and nine mystical names, was engraved. When he chose to use this ring, all the spirits of air, the spirits of earth, the spirits of water and the spirits of fire were obliged to obey him. The name of such a ring is usually "Talisman."

Here is another of Browning's jewels, one of the last poems written shortly before his death. It is entitled "Summum Bonum,"—signifying "the highest good." The subject is a kiss; we may understand that the first betrothal kiss is the mark of affection described. When the promise of marriage has been made, that promise is sealed or confirmed by the first kiss. But this refers only to the refined classes of society. Among the English people proper, especially the

country folk, kissing a girl is only a form of showing mere good will, and has no serious meaning at all.

All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee:
  All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart of one gem:
In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of the sea:
  Breath and bloom, shade and shine,—wonder, wealth, and—how far above them—
    Truth, that's brighter than gem,
    Trust, that's purer than pearl,—
Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe—all were for me
    In the kiss of one girl.

There is in this a suggestion of Ben Jonson, who uses almost exactly the same simile without any moral significance. The advantage of Browning is that he has used the sensuous imagery for ethical symbolism; here he greatly surpasses Jonson, though it would be hard to improve upon the beauty of Jonson's verses, as merely describing visual beauty. Here are Jonson's stanzas:

THE TRIUMPH

See the Chariot at hand here of Love,
  Wherein my Lady rideth!
Each that draws is a swan or a dove,
  And well the car Love guideth.
As she goes, all hearts do duty
    Unto her beauty;
And enamour'd do wish, so they might
    But enjoy such a sight,
That they still were to run by her side,
Through swords, through seas, whither she would ride.

Do but look on her eyes, they do light
  All that Love's world compriseth!
Do but look on her hair, it is bright
  As Love's star when it riseth!
Do but mark, her forehead's smoother
    Than words that soothe her;
And from her arch'd brows such a grace

Sheds itself through the face,
As alone there triumphs to the life
All the gain, all the good, of the elements' strife.

Have you seen but a bright lily grow
Before rude hands have touch'd it?
Have you mark'd but the fall of the snow
Before the soil hath smutch'd it?
Have you felt the wool of beaver,
Or swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o' the bud o' the brier,
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
O so white, O so soft, O so sweet is she!

The first of the above stanzas is a study after the Roman poets; but the last stanza is Jonson's own and is very famous. You will see that Browning was probably inspired by him, but I think that his verses are much more beautiful in thought and feeling.

There is one type of ideal woman very seldom described in poetry—the old maid, the woman whom sorrow or misfortune prevents from fulfilling her natural destiny. Commonly the woman who never marries is said to become cross, bad tempered, unpleasant in character. She could not be blamed for this, I think; but there are old maids who always remain as unselfish and frank and kind as a girl, and who keep the charm of girlhood even when their hair is white. Hartley Coleridge, son of the great Samuel, attempted to describe such a one, and his picture is both touching and beautiful.

THE SOLITARY-HEARTED

She was a queen of noble Nature's crowning,
A smile of hers was like an act of grace;
She had no winsome looks, no pretty frowning,
Like daily beauties of the vulgar race:
But if she smiled, a light was on her face,
A clear, cool kindliness, a lunar beam

Of peaceful radiance, silvering o'er the stream
Of human thought with unabiding glory;
Not quite a waking truth, not quite a dream,
A visitation, bright and transitory.

But she is changed,—hath felt the touch of sorrow,
No love hath she, no understanding friend;
O grief! when Heaven is forced of earth to borrow
What the poor niggard earth has not to lend;
But when the stalk is snapt, the rose must bend.
The tallest flower that skyward rears its head
Grows from the common ground, and there must shed
Its delicate petals. Cruel fate, too surely,
That they should find so base a bridal bed,
Who lived in virgin pride, so sweet and purely.

She had a brother, and a tender father,
And she was loved, but not as others are
From whom we ask return of love, – but rather
As one might love a dream; a phantom fair
Of something exquisitely strange and rare,
Which all were glad to look on, men and maids,
Yet no one claim'd—as oft, in dewy glades,
The peering primrose, like a sudden gladness,
Gleams on the soul, yet unregarded fades;—
The joy is ours, but all its own the sadness.

'Tis vain to say—her worst of grief is only
The common lot, which all the world have known;
To her 'tis more, because her heart is lonely,
And yet she hath no strength to stand alone,—
Once she had playmates, fancies of her own,
And she did love them. They are past away
As Fairies vanish at the break of day;
And like a spectre of an age departed,
Or unsphered Angel wofully astray,
She glides along—the solitary-hearted.

Perhaps it is scarcely possible for you to imagine that a woman finds it impossible to marry because of being too beautiful, too wise, and too good. In Western countries it

is not impossible at all. You must try to imagine entirely different social conditions—conditions in which marriage depends much more upon the person than upon the parents, much more upon inclination than upon anything else. A woman's chances of marriage depend very much upon herself, upon her power of pleasing and charming. Thousands and tens of thousands can never get married. Now there are cases in which a woman can please too much. Men become afraid of her. They think, "She knows too much, I dare not be frank with her"—or, "She is too beautiful, she never would accept a common person like me"—or, "She is too formal and correct, she would never forgive a mistake, and I could never be happy with her." Not only is this possible, but it frequently happens. Too much excellence makes a misfortune. I think you can understand it best by the reference to the very natural prejudice against over-educated women, a prejudice founded upon experience and existing in all countries, even in Japan. Men are not attracted to a woman because she is excellent at mathematics, because she knows eight or nine different languages, because she has acquired all the conventions of high-pressure training. Men do not care about that. They want love and trust and kindliness and ability to make a home beautiful and happy. Well, the poem we have been reading is very pathetic because it describes a woman who cannot fulfil her natural destiny, cannot be loved—this through no fault of her own, but quite the reverse. To be too much advanced beyond one's time and environment is even a worse misfortune than to be too much behind.

CHAPTER VI

NOTE ON THE INFLUENCE OF FINNISH POETRY IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE subject of Finnish poetry ought to have a special interest for the Japanese student, if only for the reason that Finnish poetry comes more closely in many respects to Japanese poetry than any other form of Western poetry. Indeed it is supposed that the Finnish race is more akin to the Tartar races, and therefore probably to the Japanese, than the races of Europe proper. Again, through Longfellow, the value of Finnish poetry to English poetry was first suggested, and I think you know that Longfellow's Indian epic, "The Song of Hiawatha," was modelled entirely upon the Finnish *Kalevala.*

But a word about the *Kalevala,* which has a very interesting history. I believe you know that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the *Kalevala* was not known to exist. During the first half of the century, Finnish scholars in the University of Helsingfors (where there is now a great and flourishing university) began to take literary interest in the popular songs of Finland. For years the people had been singing extraordinary songs, full of a strange beauty and weirdness quite unlike any other popular songs of Europe; and for centuries professional singers had been wandering about the country teaching these songs to the accompaniment of a kind of *biwa* called Kantela. The scholars of the University began to collect these songs from the mouths of the peasants and musicians—at first with great difficulty, afterwards with much success. The difficulty was a very curious one. In Finland the ancient pagan religion had really never died; the songs of the peas-

ants were full of allusions to the old faith and the old gods, and the orthodox church had often attempted in vain to prevent the singing of these songs, because they were not Christian. So the peasants at first thought that the scholars who wanted to copy the songs were government spies or church spies who wanted evidence to justify punishments. When the fears of the people had been removed and when they came to understand that the questioners were only scholars interested in literary beauty, all the secret stores of songs were generously opened, and an immense collection of oral literature was amassed in the University at Helsingfors.

The greatest of the scholars engaged in the subsequent work of arranging and classifying was Doctor Lönnrot. While examining the manuscript of these poems he was struck by the fact that, put together in a particular order, they naturally made one great continuous story or epic. Was it possible that the Finnish people had had during all these centuries an epic unknown to the world of literature? Many persons would have ridiculed the idea. But Lönnrot followed up that idea, and after some years' study he disengaged from all that mass of song something in the shape of a wonderful epic, the epic of the *Kalevala.* Lönnrot was probably, almost certainly, the only one who had even understood the idea of an epic of this kind. The peasants did not know. They only had the fragments of the whole; parts of the poem existed in one province, parts in another; no Finnish musician had ever known the whole. The whole may have been made first by Lönnrot. At all events he was the Homer of the *Kalevala,* and it was fortunate for Finland that he happened to be himself both a scholar and a poet—qualifications seldom united in the same person.

What is the *Kalevala* as we now possess it? It is an epic, but not like any other epic in the world, for the subject of it is Magic. We might call it the Epic of Magic. It is the story of how the world and the heaven and the sun and the moon and the stars, the elements and the races

of living creatures and all other things were created by magic; also how the first inhabitants of the world lived, and loved, and fought. But there is another thing to be said in a general way about this magic. The magic of the *Kalevala* is not like anything else known by that name in European literature. The magic of the *Kalevala* is entirely the magic of words. These ancient people believed in the existence of words, by the utterance of which anything might be accomplished. Instead of buying wood and hiring carpenters, you might build a house by uttering certain magical words. If you had no horse and wanted to travel rapidly, you could make a horse for yourself out of bits of bark and old sticks by uttering over them certain magical words. But this was not all. Beings of intellect, men and women, whole armies of men, in fact, might be created in a moment by the utterance of these mystical words. There is the real subject of the *Kalevala.*

I told you that the epic is not like anything else in European literature and not like anything else in the world as to the subject. But this is not the case as regards the verse. The verse is not like Japanese verse, indeed, but it comes nearer to it than any other European verse does. Of course even in Finnish verse, accents mean a great deal, and accent means nothing at all in Japanese verse. But I imagine something very much like Finnish verse might be written in Japanese, provided that in reciting it a slight stress is thrown on certain syllables. Of course you know something about Longfellow's "Hiawatha"—such lines as these:

And the evening sun descending
Set the clouds on fire with redness,
Burned the broad sky, like a prairie,
Left upon the level water
One long track and trail of splendor,
Down whose stream, as down a river,
Westward, westward Hiawatha
Sailed into the fiery sunset,

Sailed into the purple vapors,
Sailed into the dusk of evening.*

You will observe this is verse of eight syllables with four trochees to a line. Now it is perhaps as near to Finnish verse as English verse can be made. But the Finnish verse is more musical, and it is much more flexible, and the rules of it can be better carried out than in English. There is much more to be thought about than the placing of four trochaic feet to a line. Not only must the verse be trochaic, it must also be alliterative, and it must also be, to some extent, rhymed verse—a matter which Longfellow did not take into consideration. That would have doubled his difficulty. To make verse trochaic, alliterative and rhymed, is very difficult indeed—that is, to do it well. Only one liberty is allowed; it is not necessary that the rhyme shall be regular and constant; it is necessary only that it should be occasional. But the interest of Finnish verse does not end here. I have not yet mentioned the most important law of Finnish poetry—the law of parallelism or repetition. Parallelism is the better word. It means the repetition of a thought in a slightly modified way. It is parallelism especially that makes so splendid the English translation of the Bible, and the majesty of such passages in the Book of Common Prayer as the Funeral Service. So that Finnish poetry is anything but very simple. We may now sum it up thus—trochaic verse of eight syllables, with alliteration and rhyme, a caesura in the same part of every line, and every line reiterated in parallelism.

A little above I mentioned the English of the Bible. Long ago I explained why that English is so beautiful and so strong. But remember that much of the best of the Bible, in the original Hebrew, was not prose but verse, and that the fine effects have been produced by translating the verse into musical prose. The very effect can be produced by translating the *Kalevala* into prose. Occasionally the passages are of surprising beauty, and they are always of surprising

* *The Song of Hiawatha,* XXII *Hiawatha's Departure.*

strangeness.

It is in parallelism especially that Finnish poetry offers a contrast to Japanese, but there is no reason whatever why, in the longer poems of Japanese poetry, parallelism could not be used. All things have value according to place and time, and this has value—provided that it has a special effect on a special occasion. All through the *Kalevala*, all through five hundred pages, large pages,* the parallelism is carried on, and yet one never gets tired. It is not monotonous. But that is because the subject is so well adapted to this form of poetry. See how the poem opens, when the poet begins to talk about what he is going to sing:—

"Anciently my father sang me these words in hewing the handle of his ax; anciently my mother taught me these words as she turned her spindle. In that time I was only a child, a little child at the breast,—a useless little being creeping upon the floor at the feet of its nurse, its cheek bedaubed with milk. And there are other words which I drew from the spring of knowledge, which I found by the wayside, which I snatched from the heart of the thickets, which I detached from the branches of the trees, which I gathered at the edges of the pastures—when, in my infancy, I used to go to guard the flocks, in the midst of the honey-streaming meadows, upon the gold-shining hills, behind the black Muurikki, behind the spotted Kimmo, my favourite cows.

"Also the cold sang the songs, the rain sang me verses, the winds of heaven, the waves of the sea made me hear their poems, the birds instructed me with their melodies, the long-haired trees invited me to their concerts. And all the songs I gathered together, I rolled them up in a skin, I carried them away in my beautiful little holiday sledge, I deposited them in the bottom of a chest of brass, upon the highest shelf of my treasure house."

Now when a poem opens that way we may be sure that there are great things in it; and some of these great things

* *Le Kalevala.* Traduit par L. Leouzon de Duc. Paris: Internationale. 1867. (Hearn Library No. 1764).

we shall read about presently. The *Kalevala* is full of wonderful stories. But in the above quotation, I want you to see how multiple it is, and yet it is beautiful. Now there is a very interesting thing yet to tell you about this parallelism. Such poems as those of the *Kalevala* have always to be sung not by one singer but by two. The two singers straddle a bench facing each other and hold each other's hands. Then they sing alternately, each chanting one line, rocking back and forward, pulling each other to and fro as they sing—so that it is like the motion of rowing. One chants a line and pulls backward, then the other chants the next line and pulls in the opposite direction. Not to be able to answer at once would be considered a great disgrace; and every singer has to be able to improvise as well as to sing. And that is the signification of the following verse:

"Put thy hand to my hand—place thy fingers between my fingers—that we may sing of the things which are."

The most beautiful story in this wonderful book is the story of Kullervo. It was after reading this story that Longfellow imagined his story of the Strong Man Kwasind.* Kullervo is born so strong that as an infant he breaks his cradle to pieces, and as a boy he cannot do any work, for all the tools and instruments break in his grasp. Therefore he gives a great deal of trouble at home and has to go out into the world to seek his fortune. In the world, of course, he has just the same trouble; for nobody will employ him very long. However, the story of Kullervo's feats of strength, though interesting, need not now concern us. The great charm of this composition is in the description of a mother's love which it contains. Kullervo brought misfortune everywhere simply by his strength and by his great passions—at last committing a terrible crime, causing the death of his own sister, whom he does not recognize. He goes back home in desperation and remorse; and there everybody regards him with horror, except only his mother. She alone

* In *The Song of Hiawatha.*

tries to console him; she alone tells him that repentance may bring him rest. He then proposes to go away and amend his wrong-doing in solitude. But first he bids them all goodbye, and the episode is characteristic.

Kullervo, son of Kalervo, gets him ready to depart; he goes to his old father and says: "Farewell now, O my dear father. Wilt thou regret me bitterly, when thou shalt learn that I am dead?—that I have disappeared from among the multitude of the living?—that I no longer am one of the members of thy family?" The father answered: "No, certainly I will not regret thee when I shall hear that thou art dead. Another son perchance will be born to me—a son who will grow up better and wiser than thou."

Kullervo, son of Kalervo, answered: "And I also will not be sorry if I hear that thou art dead. Without any trouble I can find me such a father as thou—a stone-hearted father, a clay-mouthed father, a berry-eyed father, a straw-bearded father, a father whose feet are made of the roots of the willow tree, a father whose flesh is decaying wood." Why does Kullervo use these extraordinary terms? It is a reference to magic—out of stone and clay and straw, a phantom man can be made, and Kullervo means to say that his father is no more to him than a phantom father, an unreal father, a father who has no fatherly feeling. His brothers and sisters all questioned in turn if they will be sorry to hear that he is dead, make the same cruel answer; and he replies to them with the same angry words. But it is very different when he speaks to his mother.

For to his mother he said—"Oh my sweet mother, my beautiful nurse, my loved protectress, wilt thou regret me bitterly when thou shalt learn that I am dead, that I have disappeared from the multitude of the living, that I am no longer one of the members of thy family?"

The mother made answer: "Thou dost not comprehend the soul of the mother—thou canst not understand the heart of the mother. Assuredly will I regret thee most bitterly when I shall learn that thou art dead, that thou hast dis-

appeared from among the multitude of the living, that thou hast ceased to be one of the members of my famliy. Floods of tears shall I weep in my chamber. The waves of tears will overflow on the floor. And upon the stairway lamentably shall I weep; and in the stable loudly shall I sorrow. Upon the icy ways the snow shall melt under my tears—under my tears the earth of the roads shall melt away; under my tears new meadow grass shall grow up, green sprouting, and through that grass little streams shall murmur away." To this mother, naturally, Kullervo says no unkind words. He goes away, able at least to feel that there is one person in the world who loves him and one person in the world whom he loves. But how much his mother really loves him he does not yet know; he will know that later—it forms the most beautiful part of the poem.

"Kullervo directed his steps once more to the home of his fathers. Desolate he found it, desolate and deserted; no person advanced to salute him, no person came to press his hand, to give him welcome.

"He drew near to the hearth: the embers were extinguished. By that he knew that his mother had ceased to be.

"He drew near to the fire-place, and the stones of the fire-place were cold. By that he knew that his father had ceased to be.

"He turned his eyes upon the floor of his home; the planks of the floor were covered with dirt and rubbish. By that he knew that his sister had ceased to be.

"To the shore of the sea he went; the boat that used to be there was there no longer. By that he knew that his brother had ceased to be.

"Then he began to weep. For a whole day he wept, for two whole days he wept; then he cried aloud: 'O my mother, O my sweet mother, what didst thou leave thy son yet in the world? Alas! now thou canst hear me no longer; and it is in vain that I stand above thy tomb, that I sob over the place of thine eyebrows, over the place of thy temples; it is in vain that I cry out my grief above thy

dead forehead.'

"The mother of Kullervo awakened in her tomb, and out of the depth of the dust she spake to him: 'I have left the dog Mastif, in order that thou mayst go with him to the chase. Take therefore the faithful dog, and go with him into the wild forest, into the dark wilderness, even to the dwelling place, far away, of the blue-robed Virgins of the wood, and there thou wilt seek thy nourishment, thou wilt ask for the game that is necessary to thy existence.'"

It was believed that there was a particular forest god, who protected the trees and the wild things of the wood. The hunter could be successful in the chase only upon condition of obtaining his favour and permission to hunt. This explains the reference to the abode of the forest god. But Kullervo cannot go far; his remorse takes him by the throat.

"Kullervo, son of Kalervo, took his faithful dog, and directed his steps toward the wild forest, toward the dark wilderness. But when he had gone only a little way he found himself at the very place where he had outraged the young girl, where he had dishonoured the child of his mother. And all things there mourned for her—all things; the soft grass and the tender foliage, and the little plants, and the sorrowful briars. The grass was no longer green, the briars no longer blossomed, the leaves and the plants hung withered and dry about the spot where the virgin had been dishonoured, where the brother had dishonoured his sister.

"Kullervo drew forth his sword, his sharp-edged sword; a long time he looked at it, turning it in his hand, and asking it whether it would feel no pleasure in eating the flesh of the man thus loaded with infamy, in drinking the blood of the man thus covered with crime.

"And the sword knew the heart of the man: it understood the question of the hero. And it made answer to him saying: 'Why indeed should I not gladly devour the flesh of the man who is loaded with infamy? Why indeed should I not drink with pleasure the blood of the man who is burdened with crime? For well I devoured even the flesh of

the innocent man, well can I drink even the blood of the man who is free from crime.'

"Then Kullervo fixed his sword in the earth, with the handle downwards and the point upwards, and he threw himself upon the point, and the point passed through all the depth of his breast.

"This was the end of all, this was the cruel destiny of Kullervo, the irrevocable end of the son of the heroes—the death of the 'Man of Misfortune.'"

You can see how very much unlike other Western poetry this poetry is. The imagination indeed is of another race and another time than those to whose literary productions we have become accustomed. But there is beauty here; and the strangeness of it indicates a possible literary value by which any literature may be more or less enriched. Many are the particular episodes which rival the beauty and strangeness of the episode of Kullervo; and I wish that we could have time to quote them. But I can only refer to them. There is, for example, the legend of the invention of music, when the hero Wainamoinen (supposed to represent the Spirit of the Wind, and the sound of the name indicates the wailing of the wind) invents the first musical instrument. In no other literature is there anything quite like this except in the Greek story of Orpheus. Even as the trees bent down their heads to listen to the song of Orpheus, and as the wild beasts became tamed at the sound, and as the very stones of the road followed to the steps of the musician, so is it in the *Kalevala.* But the Finnish Orpheus is the greater magician. To hear him, the sun and the moon come nearer to the earth, the waves of the sea stop short, bending their heads; the cataracts of the rivers hang motionless and silent; the fish raise their heads above the water. And when he plays a sad melody, all nature weeps with him, even the trees and the stones and the little plants by the wayside. And his own tears in falling become splendid pearls for the crowns of kings.

Then very wonderful too is the story of the eternal smith,

Ilmarinen, who forged the foundations of the world, forged the mountains, forged the blue sky, so well forging them that nowhere can be seen the marks of the pincers, the marks of the hammer, the heads of the nails. Working in his smithy we see him all grime and black; upon his head there is one yard deep of iron firing, upon his shoulders there is one fathom deep of soot—the soot of the forge; for he seldom has time to bathe himself. But when the notion takes him to get married, for the first time he bathes himself, and dresses himself handsomely; then he becomes the most beautiful of men. In order to win his wife he is obliged to perform miracles of work; yet after he wins her she is killed by wild beasts. Then he sets to work to forge himself a wife, a wife of silver, a bride of gold. Very beautiful she is, but she has no heart, and she is always cold, and there is no comfort in her; even all the magic of the world-maker cannot give her a warm heart. But the work is so beautiful that he does not like to destroy it. So he takes the wife of silver, the bride of gold, to the wisest of heroes, Wainamoinen, and offers her to him as a gift. But the hero will have no such gift, "Throw her back into your forged fire, O Ilmarinen," the hero makes answer—"What greater folly, what greater sorrow can come upon man than to love a wife of silver, a bride of gold?"

This pretty story needs no explanation; the moral is simply "Never marry for money."

Then there is the story of Lemminkainen (this personality suggested the Pau-Puk-Keewis of Longfellow*)—the joyous, reckless, handsome, mischievous pleasure-lover,—always falling into trouble, because he will not follow his mother's advice, but always loved by her in spite of his follies. The mother of Lemminkainen is a more wonderful person than the mother of Kullervo. Her son has been murdered, thrown into a river—the deepest of all rivers, the river of the dead, the river of hell. And his mother goes out to find him. She asks the trees in the forest to tell her where her

* In *The Song of Hiawatha.*

son is, and she obliges them to answer. But they do not know. She asks the grass, the plants, the animals, the birds; she obliges even the road upon which he walked to talk to her; she talks to the stars and the moon and the sun. Only the sun knows, because he sees everything; and he answers, "Your son is dead, torn to pieces; he has been thrown into the river of Tuoni, the river of hell, the river of the dead." But the mother does not despair. Ilmarinen, the eternal smith, must make for her a rake of brass with teeth long enough to reach into the world of the dead, into the bottom of the abyss; and out of the abyss she brings up the parts of the torn body of her son; she puts them together; she sings over them a magic song; she brings her son to life again, and takes him home. But for a long time he is not able to remember, because he has been dead. After a long time he gets back his memory—only to get into new mischief out of which his mother must help him afresh.

The names of the three heroes quoted to you represent also the names of three great stories, out of the many stories contained in the epics. But in this epic, as in the Indian epics (I mean the Sanskrit epics), there is much more than stories. There are also chapters of moral instruction of a very curious kind—chapters about conduct, the conduct of the parents, the conduct of the children, the conduct of the husband, the conduct of the bride. The instructions to the bride are contained in the twenty-third Rune; there are altogether fifty Runes in the book. This appears to me likely to interest you, for it is written in relation to a family system not at all like the family system of the rest of Europe. I think you will find in it not a little that may remind you of Chinese teaching on the same subject—the conduct of the daughter-in-law. But there are of course many differences, and the most pleasing difference is the tone of great tenderness in which the instructions are given. Let us quote some of them:

"O young bride, O my young sister, O my well beloved and beautiful young flower, listen to the words which I am

going to speak to you, harken to the lesson which I am going to teach you. You are going now very far away from us, O beautiful flower!—you are going to take a long journey, O my wild-strawberry fruit! you are about to fly away from us, O most delicate down! you are about to leave us forever, O velvet tissue—far away from this habitation you must go, far away from this beautiful house, to enter another house, to enter into a strange family. And in that strange house your position will be very different. There you will have to walk about with care, to conduct yourself with prudence, to conduct yourself with thoughtfulness. There you will not be able, as in the house of your father, as in the dwelling of your mother, to run about where you please, to run singing through the valleys, to warble out your songs upon the roadway.

"New habits you must now learn, and forget all the old. You must abandon the love of your father and content yourself with the love of your father-in-law; you must bow very low, you must learn to be generous in the use of courteous words. You must give up old habits and form new ones; you must resign the love of your mother and content yourself with the love of your step-mother: lower must you bow, and you must learn to be lavish in the use of kindly words.

"New habits you must learn and forget the old: you must leave behind you the friendship of your brother, and content yourself with the friendship of your brother-in-law; you must bow lower than you do now; you must learn to be lavish of kindly words.

"New habits you must acquire and forget the old ones; you must leave behind you the friendship of your sister, and be satisfied with the friendship of your sister-in-law; you must learn to make humble reverence, to bow low, to be generous in kindly words.

"If the old man in the corner be to you even like a wolf, if the old woman in her corner be to you even as a she-bear in the house, if the brother-in-law be to you even

as a serpent upon the threshold, if the sister-in-law be to you even as a sharp nail, none the less you must show them each and all exactly the same respect and the same obedience that you have been accustomed to display to your father, to display to your mother, under the roof of your childhood home."

Then follows a really terrible list of the duties that she must perform every day from early morning until late at night; to mention them all would take too long. I quote only a few, enough to show that the position of a Finnish wife was by no means an easy one.

"So soon as the cock crows in the morning you must be quick to rise; you must keep your ears awake to hear the cry of the cock. And if there be no cock, or the cock does not crow, then let the moon be as a cock for you, let the constellation of the Great Bear tell you when it is time to rise. Then you must quickly make the fire, skilfully removing the ashes, without sprinkling them upon the floor. Then quickly go to the stable, clean the stable, take food to the cattle, feed all the animals on the farm. For already the cow of your mother-in-law will be lowing for food; the horse of your father-in-law will be whinnying; the milch cow of your sister-in-law will be straining at her tether; the calf of your brother-in-law will be bleating; for all will be waiting for her whose duty it is to give them hay, whose duty it is to give them food."

Like instructions are given about feeding the younger animals and the fowls and the little pigs. But she must not forget the children of the house at the same time:

"When you have fed the animals and cleaned the stables come back quickly, quickly as a snow-storm. For in the chamber the little child has awakened and has begun to cry in his cradle. He cannot speak, poor little one; he cannot tell you, if he be hungry or if he be cold, or if anything extraordinary has happened to him, before someone that he knows has come to care for him, before he hears the voice of his own mother."

After enumerating and inculcating in the same manner all the duties of the day, the conduct to be observed toward every member of the family—father-in-law, mother-in-law, sister and brother in law and the children of them—we find a very minute code of conduct set forth in regard to neighbours and acquaintances. The young wife is especially warned against gossip, against listening to any stories about what happens in other people's houses, and against telling anybody what goes on within her own. One piece of advice is memorable. If the young wife is asked whether she is well fed, she should reply always that she has the best of everything which a house can afford, this even if she should have been left without any proper nourishment for several days. Evidently the condition of submission to which Finnish women were reduced by custom was something much less merciful than has ever been known in Eastern countries. Only a very generous nature could bear such discipline; and we have many glimpses in the poem of charming natures of this kind.

You have seen that merely as a collection of wonderful stories the *Kalevala* is of extraordinary interest, that it is also of interest as describing the social ethics of a little known people—finally that it is of interest, of very remarkable interest, merely as natural poetry—poetry treating of wild nature, especially rivers and forests and mountains, of the life of the fisher and hunter and wood-cutter. Indeed, so far as this kind of poetry is concerned, the *Kalevala* stands alone among the older productions of European poetry. You do not find this love of nature in Scandinavian poetry, nor in Anglo-Saxon poetry, nor in old German poetry, much less in the earlier form of French, Italian, or Spanish poetry. The old Northern poetry comes nearest to it; for in Anglo-Saxon composition we can find at least wonderful descriptions of the sea, of storms, of the hard life of sailors. But the dominant tone in Northern poetry is war; it is in descriptions of battle, or in accounts of the death of heroes, that the ancient English or ancient Scandinavian poets ex-

celled. In Finnish poetry, on the other hand, there is little or nothing about war. These peaceful people never had any warlike history; their life was agricultural for the most part, with little or no violence except such as the excitement of hunting and fishing could produce. Therefore they had plenty of time to think about nature, to love nature and to describe it as no other people of the same period described it. Striking comparisons have been made between the Anglo-Saxon Runes, or charm songs, and Finnish songs of the same kind, which fully illustrate this difference. Like the Finns, the early English had magical songs to the gods of nature —songs for the healing of wounds and the banishing of sickness. But these are very commonplace. Not one of them can compare as poetry with the verses of the Finnish on the same subject. Here are examples in evidence. The first is a prayer said when offering food to the Spirit of the forest, that he might aid the hunter in his hunting.

"Look, O Kuntar, a fat cake, a cake with honey, that I may propitiate the forest, that I may propitiate the forest, that I may entice the thick forest for the day of my hunting, when I go in search of prey. Accept my salt, O wood, accept my porridge, O Tapio, dear king of the wood with the hat of leaves, with the beard of moss."

And here is a little prayer to the goddess of water repeated by a sick man taking water as a medicine.

"O pure water, O Lady of the Water, now do thou make me whole, lovely as before! for this I beg thee dearly, and in offering I give thee blood to appease thee, salt to propitiate thee!"

Or this:

"Goddess of the Sea, Mistress of waters, Queen of a hundred caves, arouse the scaly flocks, urge on the fishy-crowds forth from their hiding places, forth from the muddy shrine, forth from the net-hauling, to the nets of a hundred fishers! Take now thy beauteous shield, shake the golden water, with which thou frightenest the fish, and direct them toward the net beneath the dark level, above the borders

black."

Yet another:

"O vigorous mistress of the wild beasts, sweet lady of the earth, come with me, be with me, where I go. Come thou and good luck bring me, to happy fortune help me. Make thou to move the foliage, the fruit tree to be shaken, and the wild beasts drive thither, the largest and the smallest, with their snouts of every kind, with their paws of fur of all kinds!"

Now when you look at these little prayers, when you read them over and observe how pretty they are, you will also observe that they make little pictures in the mind. Cannot you see the fish gliding over the black border under the dark level of the water, to the net of a hundred fishers? Can you not see the "dear king of the wood," with his hat of leaves and his beard of moss? Can you not also see in imagination the wild creatures of the forest with their snouts of many shapes, with their fur of all kinds? But in Anglo-Saxon poetry you will not find anything like that. Anglo-Saxon Rune songs create no images. It is this picturesqueness, this actuality of imagery that is distinctive in Finnish poetry.

In the foregoing part of the lecture I have chiefly tried to interest you in the *Kalevala.* But aside from interesting you in the book itself as a story, as a poem, I hope to direct your attention to a particular feature in Finnish poetry which is most remote from Japanese poetry. I have spoken of resemblances as to structure and method; but it is just in that part of the method most opposed to Japanese tradition that the greatest interest lies. I do not mean only the use of natural imagery; I mean much more the use of parallelism to reinforce that imagery. That is the thing especially worthy of literary study. Indeed, I think that such study might greatly help towards a new development, a totally new departure in Japanese verse. In another lecture I spoke as sincerely as I could of the very high merit in the epigrammatic forms of Japanese poetry. These brief

forms of poetry have been developed in Japan to perfection not equalled elsewhere in modern poetry, perhaps not surpassed, in some respects, even by Greek poetry of the same kind. But there can be no doubt of this fact, that a national literature requires many other forms of expression than the epigrammatic form. Nothing that is good should ever be despised or cast aside; but because of its excellences, we should not be blind to the possibility of other excellences. Now Japanese literature has other forms of poetry—forms in which it is possible to produce poems of immense length, but the spirit of epigrammatic poetry has really been controlling even these to a great degree.

I mean that so far as I am able to understand the subject, the tendency of all Japanese poetry is to terse expression. Were it not well therefore to consider at least the possible result of a totally opposite tendency,—expansion of fancy, luxuriance of expression? Terseness of expression, pithiness, condensation, are of vast importance in prose, but poetry has other methods, and the *Kalevala* is one of the best possible object-lessons in the study of such methods, because of the very simplicity and naturalness with which they are followed.

Of course there was parallelism in Western poetry, and all arts of repetition, before anybody knew anything about the *Kalevala.* The most poetical part of the English Bible, as I said, whether in the Bible itself or in the Book of Common Prayer, depends almost entirely for its literary effect upon parallelism, because the old Hebrews, like the old Finns, practised this art of expression. Loosely and vaguely it was practised also by many poets almost unconsciously, who had been particularly influenced by the splendour of the scriptural translation. It had figured in prose-poetry as early as the time of Sir Thomas Browne. It had established quite a new idea of poetry even in America, where the great American poet Poe introduced it into his compositions before Longfellow studied the *Kalevala.* I told you that the work of Poe, small as it is, had influ-

enced almost every poet of the great epoch, including Tennyson and the Victorian masters. But the work even of Poe was rather instinctive than the result of any systematic idea. The systematic idea was best illustrated when the study of the *Kalevala* began.

Let us see how Longfellow used the suggestion; but remember that he was only a beginner, dealing with something entirely new—that he did not have the strength of Tennyson nor the magical genius of Swinburne to help him. He worked very simply, and probably very rapidly. There is a good deal of his "Song of Hiawatha" that is scarcely worthy of praise, and it is difficult to quote effectively from it, because the charm of the thing depends chiefly upon its reading as a whole. Nevertheless there are parts which so well show or imitate the Finnish spirit, that I must try to quote them. Take for instance the teaching of the little Indian child by his grandmother—such verses as these, where she talks to the little boy about the Milky Way in the sky:

> Many things Nokomis taught him
> Of the stars that shine in heaven;
> Showed him Ishkoodah, the comet,
> Ishkoodah, with fiery tresses;
> Showed the Death-Dance of the spirits,
> Warriors with their plumes and war-clubs,
> Flaring far away to northward
> In the frosty nights of Winter;
> Showed the broad, white road in heaven,
> Pathway of the ghosts, the shadows,
> Running straight across the heavens,
> Crowded with the ghosts, the shadows.*

Or take again the story of the origin of the flower commonly called "Dandelion":

> In his life he had one shadow,
> In his heart one sorrow had he.
> Once, as he was gazing northward,

III. *Hiawatha's Childhood.*

Far away upon a prairie
He beheld a maiden standing,
Saw a tall and slender maiden
All alone upon a prairie;
Brightest green were all her garments
And her hair was like the sunshine.
  Day by day he gazed upon her,
Day by day he sighed with passion,
Day by day his heart within him
Grew more hot with love and longing
For the maid with yellow tresses.*

Observe how the repetition served to represent the growing of the lover's admiration. The same repetition can be used much more effectively in describing weariness and pain, as in the lines about the winter famine:

O the long and dreary Winter!
O the cold and cruel Winter!
Ever thicker, thicker, thicker
Froze the ice on lake and river,
Ever deeper, deeper, deeper
Fell the snow o'er all the landscape,
Fell the covering snow, and drifted
Through the forest, round the village.
  Hardly from his buried wigwam
Could the hunter force a passage;
With his mittens and his snow-shoes
Vainly walked he through the forest,
Sought for bird or beast and found none,
Saw no track of deer or rabbit,
In the snow beheld no footprints,
In the ghastly, gleaming forest
Fell, and could not rise from weakness,
Perished there from cold and hunger.
  O the famine and the fever!
O the wasting of the famine!
O the blasting of the fever!
O the wailing of the children!
O the anguish of the women!
  All the earth was sick and famished;

*II. *The Four Winds.*

Hungry was the air around them,
Hungry was the sky above them,
And the hungry stars in heaven
Like the eyes of wolves glared at them! *

This is strong, emotionally strong, though it is not great poetry; but it makes the emotional effect of great poetry by the use of the same means which the Finnish poets used. The best part of the poem is the famine chapter, and the next best is the part entitled "The Ghosts." However, the charm of a composition can be fully felt only by those who understand something of the American Indian's life and the wild northwestern country described. That is not the immediate matter to be considered, notwithstanding. The matter to be considered is whether this method of using parallelism and repetition and alliteration can give new and great results. I believe that it can, and that a greater Longfellow would have brought such results into existence long ago. Of course, the form is primitive; it does not follow that an English poet or a Japanese poet should attempt only a return to primitive methods of poetry in detail. The detail is of small moment; the spirit is everything. Parallelism means simply the wish to present the same idea under a variety of aspects, instead of attempting to put it forward in one aspect only. Everything great in the way of thought, everything beautiful in the way of idea, has many sides. It is merely the superficial which we can see from the front only; the solid can be perceived from every possible direction, and changes shape according to the direction looked at.

The great master of English verse, Swinburne, is also a poet much given to parallelism; for he has found it of incomparable use to him in managing new forms of verse. He uses it in an immense variety of ways—ways impossible to Japanese poets or to Finnish poets; and the splendour of the results cannot be imitated in another language. But his case is interesting. The most primitive methods of Finnish poetry, and of ancient poetry in general, coming into

*XX. *The Famine.*

his hands, are reproduced into music. I propose to make a few quotations, in illustration. Here are some lines from "Atalanta in Calydon"; they are only parallelisms, but how magnificent they are!

When thou dravest the men
Of the chosen of Thrace,
None turned him again,
Nor endured he thy face
Clothed round with the blush of the
battle, with light from a terrible place.

Look again at the following lines from "A Song in Time of Revolution":

There is none of them all that is whole; their lips gape open for breath;
They are clothed with sickness of soul, and the shape of the shadow of death.

The wind is thwart in their feet; it is full of the shouting of mirth;
As one shaketh the sides of a sheet, so it shaketh the ends of the earth.

The sword, the sword is made keen; the iron has opened its mouth;
The corn is red that was green; it is bound for the sheaves of the south.

The sound of a word was shed, the sound of the wind as a breath,
In the ears of the souls that were dead, in the dust of the deepness of death;

Where the face of the moon is taken, the ways of the stars undone,
The light of the whole sky shaken, the light of the face of the sun.

. . . . . .

Where the sword was covered and hidden, and dust had grown in its side,
A word came forth which was bidden, the crying of one that cried:

The sides of the two-edged sword shall be bare, and its mouth shall be red,
For the breath of the face of the Lord that is felt in the bones of the dead.

All this is indeed very grand compared with anything in the *Kalevala* or in Longfellow's rendering; but do you not see that the grandeur is also the grandeur of parallelism? Here is proof of what a master can do with a method older

than Western civilization. But what is the inference? Is it not that the old primitive poetry contains something of eternal value, a value ranging from the lowest even to the highest, a value that can lend beauty equally to the song of a little child or to the thunder of the grandest epic verse?

CHAPTER VII

NOTE UPON THE SHORTEST FORMS OF ENGLISH POETRY

PERHAPS there is an idea among Japanese students that one general difference between Japanese and Western poetry is that the former cultivates short forms and the latter longer ones. But this is only in part true. It is true that short forms of poetry have been cultivated in the Far East more than in modern Europe; but in all European literature short forms of poetry are to be found—indeed quite as short as anything in Japanese. Like the Japanese, the old Greeks, who carried poetry to the highest perfection that it has ever attained, delighted in short forms; and "The Greek Anthology" is full of compositions containing only two or three lines, —such as those charming lines addressed to a beloved person, which John Addington Symonds thus translated:

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

You will find beautiful translations of these in Symonds' "Studies of Greek Poets," in the second volume. Following Greek taste, the Roman poets afterwards cultivated short forms of verse, but they chiefly used such verse for satirical purposes, unfortunately; I say, unfortunately, because the first great English poets who imitated the ancients were chiefly influenced by the Latin writers, and they also used the short forms for epigrammatic satire, rarely for a purely esthetic object. Ben Jonson both wrote and translated a great number of very short stanzas—two lines and four lines; but Jonson was a satirist in these forms. Herrick, as

you know, delighted in very short poems; but he was greatly influenced by Jonson, and many of his couplets and of his quatrains are worthless satires or worthless jests. However, you will find some short verses in Herrick that almost make you think of a certain class of Japanese poems. After the Elizabethan age, also, the miniature poems were still used in the fashion set by the Roman writers,—then the eighteenth century deluged us with ill-natured witty epigrams of the like brief form. It was not until comparatively modern times that our Western world fully recognized the value of the distich, triplet or quatrain for the expression of beautiful thoughts, rather than for the expression of ill-natured ones. But now that the recognition has come, it has been discovered that nothing is harder than to write a beautiful poem of two or four lines. Only great masters have been truly successful at it. Goethe, you know, made a quatrain that has become a part of world-literature:

> Who ne'er his bread in sorrow ate,—
> Who ne'er the lonely midnight hours,
> Weeping upon his bed has sate,
> He knows ye not, ye Heavenly Powers!

—meaning, of course, that inspiration and wisdom come to us only through sorrow, and that those who have never suffered never can be wise. But in the universities of England a great deal of short work of a most excellent kind has been done in Greek and Latin; and there is the celebrated case of an English student who won a prize by a poem of a single line. The subject given had been the miracle of Christ's turning water into wine at the marriage feast; and while other scholars attempted elaborate composition on the theme, this student wrote but one verse, of which the English translation is

> The modest water saw its Lord, and blushed.

Of course the force of the idea depends upon the popular conception of wine being red. The Latin and Greek model, however, did not seem to encourage much esthetic effort in

short poems of English verse until the time of the romantic movement. Then, both in France and England, many brief forms of poetry made their appearance. In France, Victor Hugo attempted composition in astonishingly varied forms of verse—some forms actually consisting of only two syllables to a line. With this surprisingly short measure begins one of Hugo's most remarkably early poems, "Les Djinns," representing the coming of evil spirits with a storm, their passing over the house where a man is at prayer, and departing into the distance again. Beginning with only two syllables to the line, the measure of the poem gradually widens as the spirits approach, becomes very wide, very long and sonorous as they reach the house, and again shrinks back to lines of two syllables as the sound of them dies away. In England a like variety of experiments has been made; but neither in France nor in England has the short form yet been as successfully cultivated as it was among the Greeks. We have some fine examples; but, as an eminent English editor observed a few years ago, not enough examples to make a book. And of course this means that there are very few; for you can make a book of poetry very well with as little as fifty pages of largely and widely printed text. However, we may cite a few modern instances.

I think that about the most perfect quatrains we have are those of the extraordinary man, Walter Savage Landor, who, you know, was a rare Greek scholar, all his splendid English work being very closely based upon the Greek models. He made a little epitaph upon himself, which is matchless of its kind:

> I strove with none, for none was worth my strife,
> Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art;
> I warmed both hands before the fire of life,
> It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

You know that Greeks used the short form a great deal for their exquisite epitaphs, and that a considerable part of the "Anthology" consists of epitaphic literature. But the

quatrain has a much wider range than this funereal limitation, and one such example of epitaph will suffice.

Only one English poet of our own day, and that a minor one, has attempted to make the poem of four lines a specialty—that is William Watson. He has written a whole volume of such little poems, but very few of them are successful. As I said before, we have not enough good poems of this sort for a book; and the reason is not because English poets despise the short form, but because it is supremely difficult. The Greeks succeeded in it, but we are still far behind the Greeks in the shaping of any kind of verse. The best of Watson's pieces take the form of philosophical suggestions; and this kind of verse is particularly well adapted to philosophical utterance.

> Think not thy wisdom can illume away
> The ancient tanglement of night and day.
> Enough, to acknowledge both, and both revere:
> They see not clearliest who see all things clear.

That is to say, do not think that any human knowledge will ever be able to make you understand the mystery of the universe with its darkness and light, its joy and pain. It is best to revere the powers that make both good and evil, and to remember that the keenest, worldly, practical minds are not the minds that best perceive the great truths and mysteries of existence. Here is another little bit, reminding us somewhat of Goethe's quatrain, already quoted.

> Lives there whom Pain hath evermore pass'd by
> And Sorrow shunn'd with an averted eye?
> Him do thou pity, him above the rest,
> Him of all hapless mortals most unbless'd.

That needs no commentary, and it contains a large truth in small space. Here is a little bit on the subject of the artist's ambition, which is also good.

> The thousand painful steps at last are trod,
> At last the temple's difficult door we win;

But perfect on his pedestal, the god
Freezes us hopeless when we enter in.

The higher that the artist climbs by effort, the nearer his approach to the loftier truth, the more he understands how little his very best can achieve. It is the greatest artist, he who veritably enters the presence of God—that most feels his own weakness; the perception of beauty that other men cannot see, terrifies him, freezes him motionless, as the poet says.

Out of all of Watson's epigrams I believe these are the best. The rest with the possible exception of those on the subject of love seem to me altogether failures. Emerson and various American poets also attempted the quatrain—but Emerson's verse is nearly always bad, even when his thought is sublime. One example of Emerson will suffice.

Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
But it carves the bow of beauty there,
And the ripples in rhyme the oar forsake.

The form is atrociously bad; but the reflection is grand—it is another way of expressing the beautiful old Greek thought that "God *geometrizes* everywhere"—that is, that all motion is in geometrical lines, and full of beauty. You can pick hundreds of fine things in very short verse out of Emerson, but the verse is nearly always shapeless; the composition of the man invariably makes us think of diamonds in the rough, jewels uncut. So far as form goes a much better master of quatrain is the American poet Aldrich, who wrote the following little thing, entitled "Popularity."

Such kings of shreds have wooed and won her,
Such crafty knaves her laurel owned,
It has become almost an honour
Not to be crowned.

This is good verse. The reference to "a king of shreds and patches"—that is, a beggar king—you will recognize

as Shakespearean. But although this pretty verse has in it more philosophy than satire, it approaches the satiric class of epigrams. Neither America nor England has been able to do very much in the sort of verse that we have been talking about. Now this is a very remarkable thing,—because at the English universities beautiful work has been done in Greek or Latin—in poems of a single line, of two lines, of three lines and other very brief measures. Why can it not be done in English? I suspect that it is because our English language has not yet become sufficiently perfect, sufficiently flexible, sufficiently melodious to allow of great effect with a very few words. We can do the thing in Greek or in Latin because either Greek or Latin is a more perfect language.

So much for theory. I should like to suggest, however, that it is very probable many attempts at these difficult forms of poetry will be attempted by English poets within the next few years. There is now a tendency in that direction. I do not know whether such attempts will be successful; but I should like you to understand that for Western poets they are extremely difficult and that you ought to obtain from the recognition of this fact a new sense of the real value of your own short forms of verse in the hands of a master. Effects can be produced in Japanese which the Greeks could produce with a few syllables, but which the English cannot. Now it strikes me that, instead of even thinking of throwing away old forms of verse in order to invent new ones, the future Japanese poets ought rather to develop and cultivate and prize the forms already existing, which belong to the genius of the language, and which have proved themselves capable of much that no English verse or even French verse could accomplish. Perhaps only the Italian is really comparable to Japanese in some respects; you can perform miracles with Italian verse.

CHAPTER VIII

EPIGRAMMATIC POEMS

THE lecture last given in this class was of necessity a little heavy. By way of change, I propose this term to give a few shorter and lighter lectures—the first of which will be upon the subject of epigrammatic poetry with especial reference to correspondencies in English and Japanese poetry.

Let us first take the word "epigrammatic" and consider its history. I need scarcely tell you that the word is Greek in origin and signifies a "writing upon"—a surface especially. An epigram originally was a combination intended to be *inscribed* upon a surface:—the original meaning was therefore an inscription. And the original inscription, in very ancient times was probably of a funeral kind: we may suppose that the first compositions of the sort were inscriptions upon tombstones—epitaphs.

Any inscription intended for the surface of a monument, unless the monument should happen to be a very large one, would have to be of small size. It would be necessary to say as much as possible in a very few words. Accordingly a great deal of art, literary art, would be required for effective work of this kind. The art of saying great things in very few words is the art of high poetry.

Now we find that this was just how the old Greeks understood and practised the art of short poems intended for inscription upon tombstones or monuments or marble altars of their gods. It was required for such work that the writer should be able to bestir an emotion very deeply, or to utter a thought very profoundly, or to make a religious petition very beautifully,—all in the space of a few lines. Afterwards this art of short poetry was applied to a much

larger variety of subjects; but it was still called by the ancient name. After the Greeks, the Romans took up this art, and wrote thousands of epigrams. But they never did quite so well as the Greeks; and the most precious poetry of this kind in the Western world still are the thousands of epigrams forming the bulk of what is called "The Greek Anthology"—consisting of epitaphs, votive inscriptions (for altars and offerings to the gods), inscriptions for presents made to friends, poems written in time of joy and sorrow, love poems, inscriptions probably used for the decoration of apartments or guest-chambers (much as Chinese texts are used in Japan), and a vast number of tiny gems of verse on a variety of subjects, ranging from jest to philosophy.

From the list of subjects just given, you may be reminded of subjects to which the shorter forms of Japanese poetry are commonly devoted; and the suggestion is worth remembering. In order to do full justice to Japanese poetry,—in order to understand its real worth and rank in the range of world literature,—it is very much to be hoped that somebody will sooner or later attempt a proper comparison of Japanese and Greek verse. I do not think that Greek scholarship is at all necessary for such an undertaking—though it would be useful. "The Greek Anthology" has been very extensively and very carefully translated into every European language of importance. Japanese scholars should be careful to read not the metrical ones. Probably the German work is the best; but there are very beautiful French studies and English studies also on the subject.

So much for the meaning of epigram. Epigrammatic poetry, you see, is an ancient rather than a modern art; and epigrammatic poetry of English literature, which is scanty, is not very old. But there is quite enough of it for our present purpose. Let us now speak about those forms of Japanese verse which might be compared with the various forms of epigrammatic poetry in Western literature.

You have the form called *tanka*, consisting of thirty-one syllables,—suitable for serious subjects;—you have the *haikai*,

consisting of seventeen syllables—suitable to an immense variety of subjects:—you have the *dodoitsu*, consisting of twenty-six syllables and usually devoted to love subjects. All these forms may justly be called epigrammatic poetry; and parallels for them can be found in English literature, as well as in Greek. Remember that we need not trouble ourselves while making this comparison about the mere matter of form in detail. Whether the verse be measured, as in Greek, by quantity, or as in English, by accents, the form need not concern us at all except in regard to brevity. We may dismiss it as a mere fashion of language from present consideration. But the spirit of the short poetry—the intellectual and emotional requirements of it—those we must consider, and we shall find that they are the same, or nearly the same, in the East as well as in the West. You, much better than I, know the rules about the sentiment to be expressed in the three forms of Japanese poetry which are really epigrammatic. I need not therefore attempt to say much about them. But we shall find that in English epigrammatic poetry, as in Japanese, it is the rule that the little verse should express or suggest a single emotion or idea in a powerful or clever way. However, as I said before, Greek verse offers better material for comparison. As this is only a class of English literature, nevertheless, an attempt to lecture on Greek epigrams would be quite out of place, and I shall make one comparison by way of illustration. The subject is an epitaph, composed probably about 2500 years ago for the grave of a little boy called Diodorus (Zonas of Sardis):—

"Do thou, who rowest the boat of the dead in the water of this lake, full of reeds, for Hades, having a painful task, stretch out, dark Charon, thy hand to the son of Cinyras, as he mounts on the ladder by the gang-way, and receive him. For his sandals will cause the lad to slip about; and he fears to put his feet naked on the sand of the shore."

There could not have been any relation between the Greek fancy of the time of that inscription, and the Japanese fancy of the eighth century. But some time between the years

700 and 750 the Japanese poet, Okura, made a verse about the death of his little son Furuhi which is strangely like the Greek epigram. The form is *tanka,* and I suppose you all know the original text,* which I have tried to render as follows:—

"So young he is that he cannot know the way. To the messenger of the Underworld I will give a bribe, and entreat him, saying:—'Do thou kindly take the little one upon thy back along the road.'"

This is the beautiful serious form of an epigram; and modern Western epigrams are best when they are serious. Considering these verses I shall begin a series of quotations, and those of you who love poetry will probably be able to find in old Japanese poetry the parallel for every citation I am able to offer.

Poems on death naturally take the first place, and these do not always lose their beauty because the pathos always mingles some light or pretty play of words. Here is an example on the death of twin sisters—the art of the composition plays with the fact of the extraordinary resemblance which twins usually bear to each other:—

ON TWIN-SISTERS

Fair marble, tell to future days
  That here two virgin-sisters lie,
Whose life employ'd each tongue in praise,
  Whose death gave tears to every eye.
In stature, beauty, years and fame,
  Together as they grew, they shone;
Somuch alike, so much the same,
  That death mistook them both for one.

Unknown.

DYING YOUNG

Is it not better at an early hour
  In its calm cell to rest the weary head,
While birds are singing and while blooms the bower,
  Than sit the fire out and go starved to bed?

* *Manyōshu,* Bk. V.

That is to say, is it not better to die while we are young and happy, than to die in the time of old age when the world has become lonesome, and all our friends are dead? To die thus old and forlorn is like sitting at a fireplace until the fire has gone out, and the room has become cold, and then to go hungry to bed. (This is by Landor.)

L I F E

Various the roads of life; in one
  All terminate, one lonely way.
We go; and "Is he gone?"
  Is all our best friends say.

That is to say, the Roads of Life are many in number; but they all end in the grave. (This also is by Landor.)

AT THE AGE OF SEVENTY-FIVE

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife,
  Nature I loved and, next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life,
  It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

Notice the splendid pride of the first line—so characteristic of Landor:—"I never entered into a contest with anybody; because I never met a man worthy to contend with me." Landor used to say that the only man whom he ever met, whom he had ever thought better than himself was Kosciuszko, the Polish patriot. It is true that Landor never dreamed of contending with anybody in the literature of which he was a peerless master. But he was in private life a terribly passionate and violent—though a noble and generous—man.

AT EIGHTY YEARS OF AGE

To my ninth decade I have totter'd on,
  And no soft arm bends now my steps to steady;
She, who once led me where she would, is gone,
  So when he calls me, Death shall find me ready.

LAST EPIGRAM ON DEATH

Death stands above me, whispering low
I know not what into my ear:
Of his strange language all I know
Is, there is not a word of fear.

These noble epigrams are truly Greek in manner; and Landor was a Greek scholar, and followed Greek models in all his work. That is why he wrote so many epigrams. But here is something by him still more Greek:—

ON THE DEATH OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

Stand close around, ye Stygian set,
With Dirce in one boat convey'd!
Or Charon, seeing, may forget
That he is old and she a shade.

The poem is commonly entitled "Dirce." The word "Stygian" means "of the dead," "of Hades"—it is derived from the name of the river Styx, over which the souls of the dead were ferried by Charon. Paraphrased, the quatrain signifies:—"Come hither, O ghosts who must cross the River of the Dead with Dirce! When you enter the boat with her, place yourselves about her so that she may be hidden from the eyes of the boatman. For otherwise, Charon, seeing so beautiful a form, might forget that he is too old to make love, and that she is only a ghost."

SEPARATION

There is a mountain and a wood between us,
Where the lone shepherd and the late bird have seen us
Morning and noon and eventide repass.
Between us now the mountain and the wood
Seem standing darker than last year they stood,
And say we must not cross—Alas 'Alas'

This is again by Landor. Does it not remind you of certain Chinese poems on the same subject of separation?

DREAM

It often comes into my head
That we may dream when we are dead,
  But I am far from sure we do.
O that it were so! then my rest
Would be indeed among the blest;
  I should for ever dream of you.

Landor.

A more beautiful thought could not be expressed in fewer words, than this wish after death to dream for ever of the beloved person:

DECEIT

You smiled, you spoke, and I believed,
By every word and smile deceived.
Another man would hope no more;
Nor hope I what I hoped before:
But let not this last wish be vain;
Deceive, deceive me once again!

Landor.

EPITAPH

Gaily I lived as ease and nature taught,
And spent my little life without a thought;
And am annoyed that Death, that tyrant grim,
Should think of me, who never thought of him.

Unknown.

THINK ONLY OF THE END

My soul, sit thou a patient looker-on;
Judge not the play before the play is done:
Her plot hath many changes; every day
Speaks a new scene; the last act crowns the play.

The above is by Richard Quarles the famous author of the curious book called "Emblems." Quarles was a religious mystic—he was born in 1592 and died in 1644. There is nothing to explain in the quatrain except the use of the word "her" at the beginning of the third line. We should now

say "its." In the time of Shakespeare, and indeed throughout the period of Tudor English, it was customary to use the possessive pronoun "his" and "her" where it would not be admissable to use "its." The quatrain signifies this: "My soul, you are like a person at the theatre who becomes impatient with the play before he has seen even half of it. Be patient. The name of the play is Life—and when it is done,—then you will be able to understand it and to judge it more justly."

TO SLEEP

Come, gentle sleep, attend thy votary's prayer,
And, tho' Death's image, to my couch repair;
How sweet, tho' lifeless, yet with life to lie,
And without dying, O, how sweet to die!

The author is John Wolcot, a poet of the latter part of the eighteenth century. The allusions here are partly mythological. Greek mythology called Death and Sleep brothers;—and Love was sometimes also called a brother of Death. Death and Sleep in Greek art were represented like twins—hence the poet can classically call Sleep the image of Death. But of course he is also stating a beautiful natural fact—that sleep is a temporary death without pain.

TO A LADY

'Tis not the lily-brow I prize,
Nor roseate cheeks, nor sunny eyes,
  Enough of lilies and of roses!
A thousand-fold more dear to me
The gentle look that Love discloses,—
  The look that Love alone can see!

This gracious fancy is by Coleridge, and it is well worthy of him. Truly the most beautiful thing in the world is the simple look that speaks affection; and, compared with it, all other beauties are as nothing.

EPITAPH

May! Be thou never graced with birds that sing,
Nor Flora's pride

In thee all flowers and roses spring,
Mine only died.

This is by the poet William Browne, of Tavistock;—he flourished between 1588—1643. May is especially the month of birds and flowers. The poet craves that in that month no birds shall sing or flowers bloom, because his bird, his flower, his beloved died on the tenth day of that month in 1614. Browne was also the author of a very famous epitaph on the Countess of Pembroke:—

Underneath this sable herse
Lies the subject of all verse:
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother:
Death, ere thou hast slain another
Fair and learn'd and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee.

That is to say that Death himself must die before another person so good as this sister of Sidney shall die. Time will first kill Death. The word "herse" is now usually spelled "hearse." It means the black carriage in which the coffin is borne to the cemetery.

THE CHARM OF HOME

The singing Kettle and the purring Cat,
The gentle breathing of the cradled Babe,
The silence of the Mother's love-bright eye,
And tender smile answering its smile of sleep.

(Nothing more true than this has ever been written: it is by Coleridge.)

SOUL-BEAUTY

O beauty in a beauteous body dight!
Body that veiling brightness, became bright,—
Fair cloud which less we see, than by thee see delight.

Coleridge.

MARRIAGE

There are two births, the one when Light
First strikes the new-awaken'd sense—

The other when two souls unite,
And we must count our life from then.

Coleridge.

TO THE SPIRIT OF A DEAD HUSBAND

Yet art thou happier far than she
Who feels the widow's love for thee!
For while her days are days of weeping,
Thou in peace, in silence sleeping,
In some still world, unknown, remote,
  The mighty parent's care hast found,
Without whose tender guardian thought
  No sparrow falleth to the ground.

Coleridge.

(The allusion is Scriptural; but the grace of the composition is almost of the very highest.)

I believe the last example is one of the very longest. However, epigrammatic verses exist in England shorter than any of these. I am not giving any attention at all to what are commonly called epigrams in these later times—satirical or merely wicked: I am quoting only true epigrams, real poetry in the best sense. But it is worth while observing that formerly English poets thought that such things could be effectively written only in Latin or in Greek, and in the history of English literary scholarship there are few things more interesting than the Latin epigrams of Richard Crashaw. I am quoting Crashaw's name because it has been so often said, about Japanese poetry, that nothing great can be done within a very small limit. The shortest poem of Japanese poetry, I suppose is seventeen syllables. Here is the shortest form of Crashaw's epigram:—

Vidit et erubuit nympha pudica Deum.

(The modest Nymph beheld her God and blushed.)

Here are only fourteen syllables—an immortality. The subject given to the student at Cambridge was the miracle at the marriage feast at Cana when Christ changed the water into wine. Crashaw is said to have written only that one line

on the subject, but that one line obtained the prize and perpetual honour. A little explanation is necessary. Crashaw did exactly what the Japanese poet does—he used one word to express two meanings. That word is *Nymph*. Nymph means in Latin either the divinity of a river or a spring or the water of the spring. You will now see how the changing of the water into red wine might be classically compared to the modest blush of a maiden—the divinities of the spring being all represented as maiden goddesses by antique artists. If so much can be done with fourteen syllables, what is the matter with seventeen syllables or twenty-six syllables, or thirty-one syllables? But we have one line epigrams in English as well as in Latin. Here is one by Rossetti and it is grand:—

TO ART

I loved thee ere I loved a woman, Love.

You must understand the word "love" is in apposition with "thee." Love is a common term of caress between husband and wife. Here are a few more examples from Rossetti of extremely brief form:—

As much as in a hundred years, she's dead:
Yet is to-day the day on which she died.

(More sorrow could not be uttered in two lines—that is an utterance of supreme despair.)

Regret for unkind things done:

Where is the man whose soul has never waked
To sudden pity of the torn past?

(Here past time is substituted metaphorically for heart—the thought is really this: "What man does not sometimes think with pain of the pain that in other times he needlessly gave to others?")

AT THE APPROACH OF DEATH

Who shall say what is said in me,
With all that I might have been dead in me?

Paraphrased: "Now splendid inspiration come to me,—

O how much there is that I wish to say. But never shall I have time to say it,—for my youth and strength are gone,—and there never will be anyone else who can say it for me, because there will never be in this world any other mind that has felt and suffered in exactly the same way as mine."

DOUBT

Would God I knew there were a God to thank
When thanks rise in me!

(That is to say: "When I feel my heart full of gratitude and delight, how much do I wish that I could be sure there were a God so I might speak my thanks to him." This is much more than a poem of doubt though I have so entitled it. It expresses also the pain which a generous nature feels at the absence of human sympathy, and the fear that higher sympathy may not exist.)

I am not sure that you know that even Tennyson wrote poems of this kind. His famous lines about the flower are a good example of a metaphysical or philosophical epigram.

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

This is true—if we could understand even the mystery of life in a little plant, we could understand the secret of the Universe. This little poem might be entitled "The Mystery of Life." Another example from Tennyson entitled "The Play":

Act first, this Earth, a stage so gloom'd with woe
  You all but sicken at the shifting scenes.
And yet be patient. Our Playwright may show
  In some fifth Act what this wild Drama means.

This is an old subject of epigram poetry; you have already had one example. The terms used are theatric;

and you must remember that the phrase "to shift a scene" or "scene shifting" is commonly used of moving and changing the artificial scenery on a stage. But of course Tennyson uses the word "scene" in a double meaning—both in the meaning of appearance or condition, and in the meaning of artificial painted scenery. The reference to "a fifth act" also needs a word: you must remember that most English plays of the grand school are written in five acts—so that the expression "fifth act" really means "last act." Paraphrased now, we have the meaning thus: "This world is indeed like a stage and like the play that is being performed upon that stage. We do not like the play. It is very gloomy, very sad. But let us be patient. So far we have seen only the first act. When the fifth act—when the last act—shall have been played—then we shall be in a better condition to judge." One more from Tennyson, it is an epitaph; and he has written several others, but this will interest you most. It was written for the tomb of the great Caxton, the first English printer, who is buried in Westminster Abbey. Caxton's motto was "Fiat lux"—two Latin words signifying "Let there be light!"—and taken from the Vulgate version of the Bible. It is necessary to remember this in order to understand the beauty of Tennyson's inscription.

> Thy prayer was 'Light—more Light—while Time shall last!'
> Thou sawest a glory growing on the night,
> But not the shadows which that light would cast,
> Till shadows vanish in the Light of Light.

In the first line the words "light" signify knowledge—in the last line they signify Supreme Knowledge. We must paraphrase freely in order to present the whole beauty of the thought:—

"Caxton, you prayed that there should be more knowledge in the world, and that knowledge will always continue to grow and spread. But you did not then understand how much pain and sorrow larger knowledge would bring—you

did not perceive the shadows which the light of knowledge would cast. Yet that cannot be helped. We must accept all knowledge, and the pain which it brings, cheerfully until all pain shall vanish in the light of the Knowledge Supreme."

Here is something lighter and a little bit longer. It is a very great love epigram; and you will understand it better by remembering two things—the custom of women in wearing roses in the breast, when in full dress, and the custom of adopting the rose as a political emblem in the great Civil War in England. At that time the House of Lancaster adopted as an emblem the red rose; and the House of York adopted the white rose. Hundreds of years ago some gentleman fighting on the York side loved a girl whose family belonged to the Lancaster side; and he sent her a rose with this little poem. Nobody now knows who he was or who she was; but the poem is so pretty that it still lives:—

If this fair rose offend thy sight,
  Placed in thy bosom bare,
'Twill blush to find itself less white,
  And turn Lancastrian there.

But if thy ruby lips will spy,—
  And kiss it thou mayst deign,—
With envy pale 'twill lose its dye,
  And Yorkshire turn again.

Here is a little bit in quite another form, from George Meredith: it is only another version of Tennyson's

'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.*

But it is very pretty and a little deeper, giving the prospective rather than the retrospective consideration of the problem:—

Joy is fleet,
Sorrow slow.
Love so sweet,
Sorrow will sow.

* *In memoriam* XXVII, 15–6.

Love, that has flown
Ere day's decline,
Love to have known,
Sorrow, be mine!

Perhaps this is just a little bit beyond the border of the true epigram; but it comes so close to certain brief forms of Japanese poetry that I think it better to consider it as an epigram.

In modern times the epigram has been successfully cultivated only by really great poets: no small mind can make a good epigram. But certain poets not exactly of the first class have been moderately successful within the past few years. Here are a few epigrams from Watson,—still a living poet:—

ON A DOG, FOR AN EPITAPH

His friends he loved. His fellest earthly foes—
Cats—I believe he did but feign to hate.
My hand will miss the insinuated nose,
Mine eyes the tail that wagg'd contempt at Fate.

The best stroke of art in this quatrain is the use of the word "insinuated." Literally this word means, according to the Latin etymology, to slip between or wind between—like a snake. Now as flattery of the gentler kind makes subtle and covert approaches, like a serpent, it is often spoken of as insinuating, and there the word has the double meaning of caressing flattery and of constant quiet intrusion. How clever a dog is at putting its nose into your hand at an unexpected moment needs no comment.

A CHURCH-SPIRE

It soars like hearts of hapless men who dare
To sue for gifts the gods refuse to allot;
Who climb for ever toward they know not where,
Baffled for ever by they know not what.

(A church-spire pointing straight to the sky—yet always becoming smaller the higher it climbs, and at last vanishing in a point—makes us think of hopeless aspiration. And do

not men, in fact, continually aspire to the impossible?—are they not always praying for what could only be misfortune to them if they got it? As a matter of fact religious aspiration is much like an attempt to climb to somewhere we know nothing about, and to find ourselves kept back by something that we are equally ignorant about.)

TO A SEABIRD

Fain would I have thee barter fates with me, –
Lone loiterer where the shells like jewels be,
Hung on the fringe and frayed hem of the sea.
But no,—'twere cruel, wild-wing'd Bliss! to thee.

You will see that this is inspired by Swinburne,—and that it is an attempt to repeat Swinburne's thought in a personal way. That is generally the trouble with writers of the second or third class: they have to borrow ideas. But it is not bad.

In all the foregoing examples, you will find that I have kept to the classical meaning—the old Greek meaning of the word epigram. If I were to accept the modern meaning, I could quote hundreds and hundreds of merely witty or comical or satirical short poems without any difficulty. But it seems to me that the merely witty poems of this class—unless very pretty—correspond rather to what is called in Japanese literature [*senryū*] than to really true poetry, the poetry which can do something better than make us laugh. And as for satirical poetry I do not think that any kind of satirical literature deserves to be ranked high as compared with other verse. However, if a satirical utterance happened to contain some extraordinary truth,—some universal truth, or proverbial truth, then we may give it honour. For instance this, by Sir John Harrington who lived in the sixteenth century, is deservedly famous.

TREASON

Treason doth never prosper—What's the reason?
If it doth prosper, none dare call it treason.

Again a witty poem, if it touches something deeper than

the feeling of amusement, may deserve to be called an epigram in the Greek sense. Here is an example from Sir John Suckling who lived in the beginning of the seventeenth century:—

If man might know
The ill he must undergo
And shun it so,
Then it were good to know:
But if he undergo it,
Though he know it,
What boots him know it?
He must undergo it.

Platitude, if you like, so far as the mere statements are concerned; but these lines remind us, and really make us think about the fact that it would be a great misfortune for mankind to be able to know the future. If every one of us could know exactly what is going to happen to him or her —think of the consequence, the pain, the fear, the anxiety!

I have not said anything and will not say anything about the epigrams of Ben Jonson, or the hundreds of epigrams by Herrick, or the savage epigrams of Pope—all these belong to the class of literature which I am purposely ignoring. I only wanted you to realize that even in Western poetry very brief verse may be very great verse, and that, after all, a question of merit is quite independent of any question of length. No one form of poetry is better than any other form, except as it is used: all forms of verse become great in great use. And in the same way all style, all scholarly literature, is equally good: it is quite useless to say that one form is better than another, except in relation to appropriate use. The philosophy of the epigram may best be summed in an epigram which reminds us that nothing is so hard to do in this world as to give mankind new pleasures of thought and feeling:—

Many can rule and more can fight,
But few give myriad hearts delight.

Landor.

CHAPTER IX

SOME SYMBOLIC POETRY

As the term approaches its close I shall attempt only a short lecture. Poems of the kind which I am going to talk about are not extremely numerous; all such English poetry can be fairly represented by a small number of strong examples.

I have been told about a certain ethical code or artistic code in Japanese poetry, according to which the finished expression of a thought, the complete utterance of a feeling, is considered much inferior to the suggestion alone of the same thought or feeling, but of course I do not know to what extent this rule may be applied. Judged by Western canons of good taste such a rule would be admired, if applied only to particular classes of poetry,—especially to some of the briefer lyrical poems. But it could not be applied at all to many kinds of Western poetry. Certain kinds of poetry demand the very opposite treatment—vividness, exactness, clearness, of the most limpid sort, both in language and in thought. Others again considerably gain by being left in a kind of nebulous condition—so that the thoughts expressed appear only very faintly, as objects looming through some beautiful coloured mist.

We have in English a small store of beautiful suggestive poems, symbolic poems, mystic poems—it does not matter to which class they especially belong for the purpose of this lecture. I want only to talk of poems which leave the mind thrilling with a thought or fancy that has only been half spoken—only suggested. A poem can do this in a great many ways. It may do it by telling a story of which you have to guess the meaning. It may do it by combining together images so incongruous in themselves, that you stare

in surprise at the juxtaposition; and that while you are staring, there comes to you in a sudden flash, the sense of the meaning which the images are intended to represent only as the Chinese ideograph is intended to express a sound. It would take very long, indeed, to enumerate the various qualities or methods which make a poem suggestive;—the suggestiveness can best be explained by example.

Here is an example of a suggestive poem by Rossetti. The method is one of those above mentioned. A little story is told, completely told; but you know when you finish reading it that this story is only the symbol and suggestion of another story of a very different kind. The poem is called "The Honeysuckle."

I plucked a honeysuckle where
  The hedge on high is quick with thorn,
  And climbing for the prize, was torn,
And fouled my feet in quag-water;
  And by the thorns and by the wind
  The blossom that I took was thinn'd,
And yet I found it sweet and fair.

Thence to a richer growth I came,
  Where, nursed in mellow intercourse,
  The honeysuckles sprang by scores,
Not harried like my single stem,
  All virgin lamps of scent and dew.
  So from my hand that first I threw,
Yet plucked not any more of them.

What is the story? A man, walking along a country road, sees a honeysuckle flower in a high hedge; and he wants to get that flower. It is all alone. But it is hard to get; for there is a bit of swamp between the hedge and the road; and even after having crossed the muddy place, there are thorns in the way. But in spite of the thorns and the mud, the man gets the flower, and walks away with it. Presently he comes to a place, a real garden, where there is a magnificent hedge full of honeysuckle flowers, much more beautiful than the one which he first thought pretty,

and which he had torn his clothes and dirtied his feet in order to pluck. So he threw away that first flower, but he did not pick up any more of them. But is such a story as that worth writing a poem about? It would not be if the poem only meant what it says. But it means infinitely more. Now listen to the real story:—A young man struggling hard to make his way in the world, and very poor, but full of ambition, sees in the days of his poverty a pretty country girl whom he tries to seduce. I suppose that we should call it a mere case of selfish sex-hunger. The girl is hard to get, poor as she is; he has very difficult work to accomplish his purpose, and he is obliged to associate with many improper people and to do many improper things when he does get her. But in spite of the wrong and the poverty and the miserable association, he finds her in herself very lovable and pretty.

Suddenly after long struggling, success comes to this young man—great success. His future is secure. He enters at will into great society, and there he finds about him magnificent girls—delicate, rich, accomplished, noble, all eager to marry him—because he is recognized as a strong and successful man with a great future before him. It is now time for him to rid himself of his former mistress;—he drops her. Does he marry any of the splendid girls that now offer themselves to him? No. Why? I do not know;—the poet has not told us. It might be for two reasons. One reason would be that he has become selfish and hard and eager for pleasure only—disinclined to devote himself to the happiness of any one woman. But it might be—and this is better to think—because he already feels remorse for the wrong that he has done, and secretly wishes, when too late, that he could win back the love that he threw away: And there is a third possibility. Remember that a thing becomes more desirable to imagination in the same proportion that it is difficult to obtain. Perhaps that was the principal reason why he wanted that country girl. And as soon as we are able to obtain at will anything desirable in

itself, we cease to desire it—become indifferent. But this third suggestion is so inhuman that I do not like to entertain it. I prefer the second suggestion—that of regret.

That is one symbolic poem. I shall now offer another of a totally different kind,—in the form of a dialogue. It is a dialogue between two lovers, or perhaps between man and wife. They are jesting affectionately with each other; and both wished for magical power. "What would you do," asks the woman, "if you had the power to change me into an animal?" "I should change you into a fox," the man answers—"a beautiful shy fox. But what would you do with me, if you had the power?" "I should change you into a toad," she answers. That is the story. But that is not the real meaning of the poem which is entitled "White Witchcraft."

If you and I could change to beasts what beast would either be?
Shall you and I play Jove for once? Turn fox, then, I decree!
Shy wild sweet stealer of the grapes! Now do your worst on me!
And thus you think to spite your friend—turned loathesome? What, a toad?
So, all men shrink and shun me? Dear man, pursue your road!
Leave but my crevice in the stone a reptile's fit abode!
Now say your worst, Camidia! He's loathesome I allow:
There may or may not lurk a pearl beneath his puckered brow
But see his eyes that follow mine—love lasts there, anyhow.

The first part of the poem is simply playful:—The Lover proposes to turn his sweetheart into a fox, partly because the fruit-fox to which he refers, is a very shy and pretty creature, fond of warm bright places and fond of grapes, which in the poem, may be taken to mean the good things of life. Very possibly the idea of the fox was suggested by a verse, the fifteenth of the second chapter in the "Song of Solomon." Calling her "Camidia" gives us a clue to the meaning of the last part of the poem. Camidia was a beautiful woman loved by the Roman poet Horace; and her

real name was Gratidia. But when she got tired of Horace, and left him, he revenged himself by writing a wicked poem about her, describing her as a witch under the false name of Camidia. And the name Camidia, on account of that poem, has passed into literature as a symbolic name for a witch. Well, the woman in the poem simply means to say, "Even though I were to treat him like a witch, he would never treat me as Horace did Camidia. Even if I should turn him by magic into an ugly toad, he would love me just as much as before." In other words, real affection—not the sensual kind—takes no account of form: it is a love of soul and soul. The reference to the jewel may need explanation;—there used to be a superstition, and there still is a proverb to the effect that the ugly toad carries a precious jewel in its head. By the jewel in the poem is meant the intellectual worth of the poet.

Let me now quote to you a very beautiful poem, of the symbolic class written by a poet of whom you may not yet have heard—for he is still a very young man, and has only begun to make his reputation. His name is William Butler Yeats; and he has printed only two small volumes of poems, mostly mystical; but these are of such rare excellence, that in France, where literary merit is much more quickly recognized than in England, one of his books has been crowned by the Academy. He is an Irishman; and a great many of his poems have been inspired by ancient Celtic literature. This is one of them:—

AEDH TELLS OF THE ROSE IN HIS HEART

ALL things uncomely and broken, all things
worn out and old,
The cry of a child by the roadway, the creak
of a lumbering cart,

The heavy steps of the ploughman, splashing
the wintry mould,

Are wronging your image that blossoms a
rose in the deeps of my heart.

The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong
too great to be told;
I hunger to build them anew and sit on a
green knoll apart,

With the earth and the sky and the water,
remade, like a casket of gold
For my dreams of your image that blossoms
a rose in the deeps of my heart.

I doubt that you can understand this at once, in spite of the beautiful music and the very simple English. There is a deep thought in it,—a thought that is very seldom uttered in poetry. There is a curious fact connected with the psychology of love. Love may be an illusion: there is always some illusion about it. But, illusion or no illusion, it is a sudden vision of beauty. When this illusion comes to a young man, the effect is strange in one way—the way this poet has described. So beautiful does the beloved appear, that other things in the world seem out of harmony with her presence. Why should there be any ugliness, any unhappiness, any dreariness, in the world that contains so beautiful a creature? Having made this explanation I shall paraphrase freely:—

"Everything that I see which is ugly or broken,—everything that is worn out,—everything that I hear, that is not pleasant to hear--such as the crying of the child, the creaking of a cart lumbering over the rough roadway or the clumsy steps of the tired ploughman, as he walks through the mud, splashing it as he goes;—all these things seem to me in discord with my vision of you. The memory of you blossoms like a beautiful rose in the depth of my heart; and I wonder why there should be anything ugly or unhappy in the world.

"O how very unfortunate--how unutterably unfortunate --it is that there should be anything unpleasant or badly

formed. For your sake I wish that I had the power of a god to make the world all over again; I should make it very beautiful;—and then I should sit down on a little green hill to think about you; and the new earth and the new sky and the new water, all around me, would serve as a precious casket to contain that beautiful memory of you which is like a rose in the depth of my heart."

If you read that over again, some other time, I am sure that you will find it very beautiful. What is more, it is very natural; it has the double beauty of true poetry. Now let me give you a little symbolic poem from Rossetti called "The Woodspurge." Nobody knows the meaning of this poem immediately at the first reading, unless he has considerable experience in suggestive poetry. But if you think about it for a moment, it will become quite clear.

The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
I had walked on at the wind's will,—
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,—
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me,—
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

The meaning of this poem is simply that in the time of great pain we see things or notice things never seen before. If any of you remember distinctly the moment of receiving some very painful news—for example, the death of a parent

—you will also remember very distinctly something else that you saw or heard at the same moment: a crying of birds, the direction of sunlight entering a room, the sharp appearance of some little spot or crack in the plaster of a wall. This is what the poet intends us to understand. Something terrible has happened to him. He first walks about alone,—then, at last, weary, he sits down in the grass and thinks. All about him there is silence and green only. He is not looking at things; his mind is entirely occupied with his pain. But, involuntarily, his eyes happen to be directed upon a little flower growing at his feet. It is a woodspurge. And for the first time he notices that the flower is peculiar: it has three sets of petals, one inside of another—a triple calyx. That is all; but the intensity of grief could not be more vividly expressed than by such an incident.

I think that there are only two expressions in the poem needing explanation. The first is the use of the word "flapped" in relation to the wind. The wind is described as a something shaken suddenly, with a pulling motion,—as one might take a *furoshiki* by a corner and shake it to get rid of the dust. The comparison well gives the idea of the irregular motion of the wind upon a gusty day. But it is used with the adjective "dead." We commonly say in English, "the wind is *dead*" to imply that there is no breeze,—that it has stopped blowing. The poetic simile is a little strange, though forcible. You must understand it as something like this:—"The wind had been shaken out, until it could not be moved further."

The other expression is "had the run of"—in the third stanza. Here the word "run" means range or superficial extent. "To have the run of a place" signifies to have freedom to move or act within the circumference of that place. In other words the poet says: "In the position that I sat, I could see only about ten different plants and my eyes might have fixed themselves upon any one of the ten within that space."

Now let me give another very pretty, but simple poem

by Yeats. It represents the attitude of a poet to the woman that he loves.

AEDH WISHES FOR THE CLOTHS
OF HEAVEN

HAD I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

What does this mean? It means simply that he has made the girl a present of some little poems which he composed himself: those are his dreams. It was the custom—indeed, it is still the custom—to spread beautiful carpets of cloth along the way upon which an empress or a queen is going to walk. Sometimes the way is strewn with flowers instead. To the poet, the girl that he loves is his queen. He tells her that if he had the power he would put the beautiful sky under her feet, with its three colours,—the azure of the day, the rich black-blue of the night, and the hundred colours of twilight blended into one splendid tone. But he cannot give her the sky: he can only give her his verses; and these he offers to her as much as a carpet might be offered to a queen to tread upon. But he begs her not to judge them too harshly—not to despise them: tread softly because you tread on my dreams. And the dreams are a part of himself—his emotion, his sentiment.

I now turn to another poet, a very great poet, the greatest female poet of the nineteenth century: Miss Rossetti. She wrote many symbolic poems, and all of them are good. But I shall offer you only two examples, because we must go back again to Browning and other poets later on. See how beautiful this is, entitled "Three Seasons."

"A cup for hope!" she said,
In springtime ere the bloom was old:

The crimson wine was poor and cold
By her mouth's richer red.

"A cup for love!" how low,
How soft the words; and all the while
Her blush was rippling with a smile
Like summer after snow.

"A cup for memory!"
Cold cup that one must drain alone:
While autumn winds are up and moan
Across the barren sea.

Hope, memory, love:
Hope for fair morn, and love for day,
And memory for the evening gray
And solitary dove.

I suppose that you know the foreign custom of drinking to something or somebody—a custom dating back to older civilizations than the present. You drink a cup of wine to the health of somebody, to the success of some undertaking, or to the honour or joy of something or some one. And I think that you also know that morning, noon, and evening, as well as Spring, Summer, and Autumn, are used by poets for symbols of childhood, manhood, and old age. In this beautiful poem, the double comparison appears; we have morning coupled with Spring and first youth; noon coupled with Summer and with manhood; evening joined with Autumn and with old age. But if we include the last stanza we get a grouping something like this:—

morning	noon	evening
Spring	Summer	Autumn
childhood	manhood	old age
hope	love	memory
joy	beauty	sorrow

Now this is a really wonderful poem in the perfect complexity of its seemingly simple structure. But what does it mean? Who is the beautiful creature who offers the cup? She is the Spirit of Life,—Nature, if you like better. Youth

is the time of hope; and in that morning of life all things seem full of beauty, and Nature bids us rejoice. Then comes the time of love,—which is the noon and fullness of life,—the Summer of human existence. Again Nature gives us happiness, offers her golden cup. At last comes the evening of life,—the period of age and experience of pain. Then the world seems to us not all blue and gold, as before, but sad and gray like the sea; and our happiness is rather in the past than in the present. Then the Spirit of Life bids us seek bliss in memory. But it is a bitter bliss, because it is mixed with the pains of loss.

Some of Miss Rossetti's poems are deceptively simple like the mystic poems of Blake. Here is an example. It is called "Up-Hill."

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
    Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
    From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?
    A roof for when the slow, dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
    You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
    Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
    They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
    Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
    Yea, beds for all who come.

I think you know at once what this means. The road is the Road of Life; and the journey is hard, and becomes harder and harder all the way until the very end. And the Inn is the Grave—the resting house at whose door no man will be kept waiting. Read it over again, this poem, and over again: every time that you read it will seem more

terrible. I think there is nothing particular to explain except, perhaps, the single line of the last stanza, "Of labour you shall find the sum." It is vague—but sufficient. It means simply you will obtain the result of your work in this world. But of course the reader will be tempted to ask himself the blank question, "Is there a result?"

No man wrote so many surprising poems of this kind as Browning; and I must give you several more examples from him by reason of his great importance in Victorian literature. But between them, I shall quote other poets to you. Let us now, however, take a selection from Browning. It is called "Love in a Life."

I

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—
Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew;
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?
But 't is twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

If you ask me what this means, I am not very sure of being able to answer quite correctly—though I shall try. You can take several meanings out of poetry. It is the most obscure that I have yet ventured to quote; but it is also one of the most powerful and ghostly. The direct meaning is quite plain of course. Here is a man alone, in some house, vast as a palace, trying to overtake a figure that haunts that house. The haunting shadow is the shadow of a beau-

tiful woman. He has been always in the house;—he has seen her a thousand times;—he has seen her reflected as she passed by the looking-glass;—he has seen her touch dead flowers or artificial flowers and make them alive by her phantom touch. And there is a faint perfume wherever she has been—in the curtains by the window at which he has seen her stand; in the coverings of the bed in which she seems to have been reposing. But he never can get near enough to her to speak to her, to touch her. As he opens one door, she always passes out through another. And the house is very large—so that it is extremely difficult to discover where she is hiding. He opens closet after closet, examines alcove after alcove, explores nook after nook. She is everywhere and yet nowhere. And it is getting dark. Has he been wasting his whole day in trying to find her? He does not know; he does not care: what troubles him chiefly is that he has only examined a part of the house, and it is getting dark. After that he cannot hope to find her.

But who is she? And what is the house? The house is the House of Life; the woman is the Ideal. Every man carries about with him in his heart the image or ideal of supreme beauty and goodness. But no man can ever find this human perfection that he dreams of. The world is not perfect enough for that;—man's own nature is not perfect enough to enable him to find it even if it existed for his sake. We find plenty of goodness in the world, and love, and many charming things; but we imagine, and cannot help imagining something better than what we know. If we could not imagine it, if we did not imagine it, no great religion and no great system of ethics could exist. We become gradually better and kinder through being able to imagine what is superior to ourselves. And death comes before we have finished our search.

One more little poem by the same author; it is called "Pisgah-Sights." Pisgah is the mountain from whose top Moses was allowed to see the whole of the Promised Land

before his death, though not allowed to enter it. The reference is to the chapter in "Deuteronomy," in which his death is mentioned.

I

Over the ball of it,
    Peering and prying,
How I see all of it,
    Life there, outlying!
Roughness and smoothness,
    Shine and defilement,
Grace and uncouthness:
    One reconcilement.

II

Orbed as appointed,
    Sister with brother
Joins, ne'er disjointed
    One from the other.
All's lend-and-borrow;
    Good, see, wants evil,
Joy demands sorrow,
    Angel weds devil!

III

"Which things must—*why* be?"
    Vain our endeavour!
So shall things aye be
    As they were ever.
"Such things should *so* be!"
    Sage our desistence!
Rough-smooth let glove be,
    Mixed—man's existence!

IV

Man—wise and foolish,
    Lover and scorner,
Docile and mulish—
    Keep each his corner!
Honey yet gall of it!
    There's the life lying,
And I see all of it,
    Only, I'm dying!

"Over the edge of life, as over the surface of a great ball, or as one looking from a mountain over the round of the world, so do I see life at this moment. I see the roughness and the smoothness, the clearness and the foulness, the beauty and the ugliness;—and all these appear to be strangely joined together. I see no discord.

"All are united as by some eternal destiny. Everything seems like a universal lending and borrowing. Goodness does not satisfy alone; therefore the necessity of evil. Happiness cannot be satisfied alone; therefore do angels of women marry devils of men.

"Why should such things be? It is useless to ask why. They will always be so, and have always been so. You think that they should be otherwise. Oh! You had better not trouble your mind about what should be: you are not wise enough to know what should be. Take the world as it is, with all its joys and pains, and understand that it is necessary that human life should be made up both of good and evil.

"There are wise men, foolish men; lovable people, detestable people; weak characters and gentle; dull characters and obstinate like mules. All of these have their own work to do. They help to make the world;—try to be content with them as they are, and to judge them as generously as you can. Great is the sweetness of life; sharp also is the bitterness of it. I can see the whole meaning of life now; —but—what is the use?—I can only see it because I am dying."

There is more in this poem to think about than the apparent meaning, which is only the expression of the mystery of existence. The poet means especially to suggest that we cannot judge of life impartially, nor even see clearly, while we are actually engaged in the struggle of it. Necessarily we are obliged to think about our own interests; and naturally each one of us is inclined to love what helps those interests and to hate what opposes them. And these interests are inter-opposed in a double, triple, quadruple,—centuple

way. For not only are human desires, by reason of their intrinsic nature, opposed to each other; but the interests of races, countries, classes, periods, and individuals, are all inter-opposed. Whatever we do, we must love or hate. But, in the hour when life falls away from us, then, and only then, can we become quite just and reasonable in our judgment of it.

Returning to the subject of last term, perhaps, some of you will feel inclined to observe, "Can poetry of this kind have any other than an aesthetic or metaphysical value?" I answer, "Most certainly it can; it may have a great poetical value at times; it may have a national value." The fact is that great truths are popularly taught better by symbolism or parable than by precise and detailed statements. I am going to give you a powerful example of the use of the symbolic poetry in politics. The poem is entitled "Barbarossa;" and the author is Roden Noel, an English nobleman who has made himself a brilliant reputation both as poet and critic. But the poem needs explanation.

I think that most of you have read the strange medieval legend of the king who sleeps in a cavern in the mountains, surrounded by his knights and barons, waiting for the time when he will be needed again in this world. There are beside him two ravens,—the birds of Odin, the birds of carnage. Every hundred years he sends one of the ravens out, to see if the time has come. But the raven comes back, and says, "Not yet,"—then the king goes to sleep again. Already his white beard has grown to the table of stone at which he sits. Now this old story has been told of several kings—of Charlemagne among others. I think that you have read a German poem by Heine upon the same legend. The subject of the legend in this English poem is Barbarossa. Barbarossa, or Red Beard, was the name of Frederick the First of Germany, who belongs to the twelfth century. He was a great Emperor, a great warrior, a great statesman and a great tyrant. Probably you know that he made war no less than forty times, and that he led one of the great Crusades,

and was accidentally drowned in Palestine. But the people said that he was not dead; but only sleeping, and that he would some day come back again to make another and mightier German Empire. And it is said that it is at Untersberg in Austria that he sleeps, surrounded by his great barons and counts.

Now you have the story. It is only necessary, by way of further explanation, to remind you that when France was conquered by Germany in 1870, King William of Germany entered into the famous palace of Versailles, while his armies were besieging Paris, and there, in the wonderful Hall of Mirrors built by Louis XIV, he was crowned Emperor of Germany—i.e. King of Kings. After this you will see what a tremendous force this little poem must have had at the time to all who then imagined that European liberty was in danger.

Deep in a mountain's caverned hall,
It is whispered low,
Waits in a weird, sepulchral glow
An arméd phantom, crowned and
Whose hoary beard of centuries,
Grows on the gray stone where it lies;
While jewelled knights with glittering eyes
Glowl round
In trance profound.

Anon, at age-long intervals,
The ghostly king
Sends a raven of sable wing
From his stupendous prison-walls,
To learn how near the fated hour
When he may reassume the power,—
Behold! no raven comes again.

Behold! the raven devours the slain!
Vaults asunder
Burst in thunder!
Lo! in the hall of mirrors yonder,
In a palace consecrate to all

Age-long glories of the Gaul,
A German wears imperial
Purple: Barbarossa lives!
The ghost of a dark age revives,
And the heart of every freeman dies,
Seeing him rise!

But, as a matter of course, you know that the result of making a new German Empire was of great benefit to Western civilization in every possible way. Intellectual liberty was thereby better secured than it could have been by any other means; and the new Barbarossa was a patron of learning. Nevertheless, there was fear for the moment, at the uprising of this gigantic power; and the feeling was well expressed in this strange poem.

While on the subject of Roden Noel, let me read to you another of his symbolic poems of a very different kind:

DYING

They are waiting on the shore
For the bark to take them home;
They will toil and grieve no more;
The hour for release hath come.

All their long life lies behind,
Like a dimly blending dream;
There is nothing left to bind
To the realms that only seem.

They are waiting for the boat,
There is nothing left to do;
What was near them grows remote,
Happy silence falls like dew;
Now the shadowy bark is come,
And the weary may go home.

By still water they would rest,
In the shadow of the tree;
After battle sleep is best,
After noise tranquillity.

The title of the poem is simply old. That sufficiently explains the meaning. The comparison gives us a little picture of tired travellers reaching a ferry. Of course the ferry is that of the River of Death; and the shadowy boat is familiar to all acquainted with Greek mythology. Notice that we very often use the word "shadowy" in the sense of ghostly, just as we use the word "shade" in the meaning of spirit or ghost. The reference to resting under the shadow of a tree, by quiet waters, is biblical: it refers to the scriptural representation of Paradise.

Any emotional truth may be excellently expressed in this kind of verse. Although in one sense all symbolic poetry used to be chiefly devoted to religious subjects—that is why most of the examples that I have given you are quite modern. It is true that even in these times religious poetry of the same sort sometimes appears; but it has little value. It is in our own time that the real worth of this class of poetry has been discerned. I shall give you now a psychological example, expressing the thought of the present age. The poet is a lady named Alice Meynell—she was almost unknown a dozen years ago; she is now very well known indeed.

I come from nothing; but from where
Come the undying thoughts I bear?
    Down, through long links of death and birth,
    From the past poets of the earth.
My immortality is there.

I am like the blossom of an hour.
But long, long vanished sun and shower
    Awoke my breath i' the young world's air.
    I track the past back everywhere
Through seed and flower and seed and flower.

Or I am like a stream that flows
Full of the cold springs that arose
    In morning lands, in distant hills;
    And down the plain my channel fills
With melting of forgotten snows.

Voices I have not heard possessed
My own fresh songs; my thoughts are blessed
With relics of the far unknown;
And mixed with memories not my own
The sweet streams throng into my breast.

Before this life began to be,
The happy songs that wake in me
Woke long ago, and far apart;
Heavily on this little heart
Presses this immortality.

These verses are entitled "The Modern Poet;" but they might as well have a dozen other titles. The signification of the poem is that everybody who feels the emotion of beauty or the emotion of truth experiences something that does not belong only to himself, but to all the millions and millions of the dead that help to make them. Each one of us is not merely a single life, but a compound of innumerable lives and if we feel a grand emotion, it is so only because the whole past sometimes revives in us. But we must paraphrase these verses; for the poem is a deep one:—

"I seem to have come out of nothing. But that cannot be true—for how is it that these immortal thoughts come into my mind, these sudden inspirations, these generous emotions? Where do they come from? They come from the millions of my ancestors who have passed away;—they have come to me through an infinite succession of death and birth. It is the whole past that made me; and all that is of worth in me belongs to that past.

"I am like a flower, if you will,—a flower that blossoms for a little time only. But what made it blossom in this particular way?—What gave it these particular colours, this particular fragrance? The courses that evolved it are all of the long past, the incalculable past. Suns that have been, rains that fell in forgotten ages first made it blossom. I am a flower, if you will—but a flower that can trace back its own history through seed and flower and seed and flower across vast periods of time.

"Or I may compare myself to a river flowing in a plain, far away from any mountains, but full of cold water and clear, made by the melting of snow on the tops of mountains much too far away to be seen.

"I make songs; I compose poems. But the music of these songs, the thoughts of these poems are of the past; the feeling and the power have come to me from the dead. And the memories that I sing of are not my own memories only—they represent the experiences of numberless generations that have passed away.

"Long before I was born the thoughts and feelings that make my poems were born—and not in some one other life only, but in many other lives, and each far distant from the rest. Wherefore the past is to me not only life, not only thought, not only feeling and inspiration, but something more: a weight, a responsibility, the pressure of my being of countless ages."

Although this little poem is very profound, please to remark how simple is the language. There is not a single word needing explanation.

Another subject—also by a woman and quite recent; it is called "An Upper Chamber":—

I came into the City and none knew me;
    None came forth, none shouted "He is here."
Not a hand with laurel would bestrew me,
    All the way by which I drew anear,—
    Night my banner, and my herald Fear.

But I know where one so long had waited
    In the low room at the stairway's height,
Trembling lest my foot should be belated,
    Singing, sighing for the long hours' flight
    Towards the moment of our dear delight.

I came into the City when you hail'd me
    Saviour, and again your chosen Lord:—
Not one guessing what it was that fail'd me,
    While along the way as they adored
    Thousands, thousands, shouted in accord.

But through all the joy I knew—I only—
How the hostel of my heart lay bare and cold,
Silent of its music, and how lonely!
Never, though you crown me with your gold,
Shall I find that little chamber as of old!

Frances Bannerman.

The meaning here must be felt. The poem expressess some sad experience in the life of a successful man—most likely a statesman. He begins his career probably as a poor student, living in an attic—that is what is meant by the low room at the height of the stairway. In great Western cities, until within very recent years, a great many poor students used to live in the very top of the house—in the attic, or room immediately under the roof. The ceiling was usually low: therefore the poet calls it the low room, although it is very high up. But now since they have begun to build enormous houses with steel and cement, the top stories are sometimes very costly and magnificent places of residence. In his attic days, however, this poor student had someone to love him—some woman to whom he was sincerely attached. And the conditions were such that the relation had to be kept secret; but it was a happy one, and he could forget all the troubles of life in her company. At last, after many years of painful struggle, he becomes famous; the whole country knows him; his native city honours him with a mighty reception. As he passes through the streets, all the people shout in his honour. But now he is very lonesome; for the woman that he loved is dead, and cannot see nor hear of his fame and success. So, in the midst of the millions, he has no joy; he wishes he were, even for one hour only, the poor student in the attic room, with the person he loved to give him welcome.

Here is a very suggestive poem, only eight lines long, by a young Canadian poet called Bliss Carman. He is now a poet of some reputation,—only a minor poet, but some of his work is very original and striking. This little poem is entitled "A Sea Child"—

The lover of child Marjory
    Had one white hour of life brim full;
Now the old nurse, the rocking sea,
    Hath him to lull.

The daughter of child Marjory
    Hath in her veins, to beat and run,
The glad indomitable sea,
    The strong white sun.

Here is the whole story of the life of fisher-folk suggested in eight lines. A little girl, called Marjory, is born in a fishing village, grows up to womanhood and marries. Her husband is recently drowned—that was to be even more expected than feared. Only a small number of the fishermen reach old age: the sea devours most of them. But they are not a sad people on that account: on the contrary, they are too healthy, and simple-hearted to feel the real tragedy of life. This woman's husband died young; but he had been happy and fearless like his fathers. After his death his child is born,—a little girl who takes the same name as her mother, and who inherits the joyous strength and spirit of the dead father, the spirit of daring, the fearlessness of the sea-child. She no more fears the sea than if she were a mermaid; the breath of it is in her blood. She will, like her mother, marry a man whom the sea will probably take away from her, just as her own father was taken. But she is not sad. And the little verses are intended to make us reflect that, after all, the short and happy life of fisher-folk, humble as it is, is really happier than most of what we call the life of high places.

I am going to dictate a poem of the symbolic kind by way of illustrating another capacity of this kind of poetry, —the power that it has of expressing very deep truth, especially psychological truth by means of imagery. The poem is by Rossetti, and is called "The Mirror."

She knew it not:—most perfect pain
    To learn this too she knew not. Strife
        For me, calm hers, as from the first.

'Twas but another bubble burst
Upon the curdling draught of life,—
My silent patience mine again.

As who, of forms that crowd unknown
Within a distant mirror's shade,
Deems such an one himself, and makes
Some sign; but when the image shakes
No whit, he finds his thought betray'd,
And must seek elsewhere for his own.

This poem is exquisitely beautiful—one of the most perfect things of the kind ever written. But it requires careful explanation and study. I shall speak of the story first.

It very often happens that a man loves a woman quite incapable by nature of loving him, or even of understanding what real love is, in any way, and never could learn. She is selfish; she is bad. Then why should any good man be foolish enough to love a bad woman? Some people will say that he is actuated merely by sexual feeling; but this is not always the case; and it would be both foolish and unjust to imagine that it is always the case. A good man may happen to love a bad woman with the most unselfish affection. Then there must be a reason for this strange infatuation. The reason is simply the mistake of imagining the character of that woman to be like his own. He imagines that she feels and thinks just as he does. But that is an unfortunate mistake. Her soul is only a kind of mirror that reflects his own. Now it takes a long time for him to discover the deception. At last something happens which reveals the woman's character. And now see how beautifully the image of "The Mirror" is used to express that which happens. Let us paraphrase:

"She did not know. I did not know that she could not love me; and it was a terrible pain for me to learn the truth, and that pain she could not know anything about. With me, all was passionate earnestness, sincere affection and sincere suffering; but she always remained cold and still as

a statue. How I felt did not concern her, for she could not know how I felt. The whole experience was only another bubble upon the surface of the current of my life—a current now made thick (curdling) into pain. At last I learned to keep that pain to myself—to be silent and patient.

"My case was like that of a man watching the surface of a great mirror at the end of a room. In that mirror he sees the reflections of many people, moving about; and one of the figures he thinks to be his own reflection. But presently he is astonished to find that when he moves, the figure in the looking glass does not move. He has been deceived. So did I mistake, in the mirror of another human soul, the reflection of another for the reality of myself."

Psychological poetry finds this form especially adapted to its expression. A famous example, on the subject of Self and the mystery of Self is furnished by Lord Houghton's composition entitled "Strangers Yet." One of the things that everybody discovers sooner or later in life,—although very young people never think about it,—is that nothing is so difficult to understand as a human personality; that is to say, the mind or character or soul of another human being. I need scarcely remind you that no two human characters can be exactly the same. But in youth we are apt to think the differences much slighter than they really are. As we grow older, we find them wider and deeper. And this is natural, because each one of us grows wider and deeper as time develops and accentuates character. At no time can we know anything of another human being except through the relation of that being to ourselves; and accordingly as we grow more complex, the relation also becomes more complex as a matter of course. But there are times when this knowledge of our imperfect relationship to other people becomes painful and makes us feel terribly alone. And it is such a moment that the following poem must have been composed:—

STRANGERS YET

Strangers yet!
After years of life together,
After fair and stormy weather,
After travel in far lands,
After touch of wedded hands,—
Why thus join'd? Why ever met,
If they must be strangers yet?

Strangers yet!
After childhood's winning ways,
After care and blame and praise,
Counsel ask'd and wisdom given,
After mutual prayers to Heaven,
Child and parent scarce regret
When they part—are strangers yet.

Strangers yet!
After strife for common ends—
After title of "old friends,"
After passions fierce and tender,
After cheerful self-surrender,
Hearts may beat and eyes be met,
And the souls be strangers yet.

Strangers yet!
Oh! the bitter thought to scan
All the loneliness of man:—
Nature, by magnetic laws,
Circle unto circle draws,
But they only touch when met,
Never mingle—strangers yet.

No doubt some part of this poem utters a truth which belongs to the life of Western rather than of Eastern society. You know that children and parents separate early in Western countries—especially in England and America: among the French and the Latin races generally the family relation is not so completely broken up. But, in spite of the fact, the verses tell something of universal truth.

The first stanza refers to the relation of husband and

wife. Surely, if any two human beings could perfectly understand each other, those two would be husband and wife. There is the most intimate of human relationship in adult life;—and nevertheless we sometimes find that a husband and a wife, even after having lived for many years together, do not understand each other at all, cannot be frank and sincere with one another, and even separate at last, as if they had always been perfect strangers.

The second stanza treats of the relation between parents and children. (This is the stanza containing facts which do not, I think, relate much to Eastern society). One would suppose that no relation could be more tender, more intimate, more affectionate, more grateful in a merely emotional sense than the relation of child and parent—and it is so while the child remains the child. But as the child grows up to manhood, or to womanhood, the character changes; and the love is too often forgotten. The girl voluntarily leaves her parents to marry the man of her choice. The youth quits his father and mother without regret for his wife. Thereafter the son or daughter is scarcely more than an occasional visitor at the house of the parents. That is indeed the English way;—but you must remember that English school life, separating the children entirely from the parents, and training them in a particular, hard fashion, prepares the way for the ultimate separation. When the boy or girl comes from school, the parents seem like strangers, or at most like distant friends.

The third stanza treats of friendship. It is not uncommon to see men quarrel and separate after a friendship of twenty and thirty years. It seems very strange that two who have grown up together, worked together, helped each other, should ever become strangers. But here again the natural law of individuality asserts itself; for character changes necessarily more and more as people grow older, and the differences become wider.

The last stanza presents a philosophical truth under a geometrical image. The spheres, or two circles, can touch each other only at a point. Take two balls of hard material—

two marbles, for example,—and put them together any way that you please; then they will only touch at a point. You cannot put one of them inside of another. So it is with any two human souls; they can touch each other only at a point of their surfaces: they cannot penetrate into each other. There is the great law of attraction in nature—the law of gravitation. There is also the great law of human attraction—the law of love. But by neither law can they ultimately, whether physical or psychical, be more than brought into temporary contact. The mystery forever remains. In view of this truth, what a lonesome thing is man! He can never know more than the surface of his fellow souls.

This is a fine poem and expresses a deep truth; but, as I told you before, it is a truth that no young man is likely to feel. Only a man who has reached the age of fifty could have written it.

One more example of this kind of poetry in conclusion. It is a very queer poem; and it is somewhat indefinitely suggestive. The symbolism is that of a river flowing into the sea; and we know that the voyage down the river means Life, and that the sea is Infinity out of which we all come and back to which we must all return. Matthew Arnold has a strangely splendid poem upon the same subject; but the treatment is quite different. M. Arnold expresses the mystery of life and a hope beyond it. But this writer expresses the pain and terror of death—that is all. The purpose of this poem is the expression of fear—the ghostly fear of death. The author is called Richard Garnett; and the poem is called "The Ballad of the Boat."

The stream was smooth as glass, we said: "Arise and let's away;"
The Siren sang beside the boat that in the rushes lay;
And spread the sail, and strong the oar, we gaily took our way.
When shall the sandy bar be cross'd? When shall we find the bay?

The broadening flood swells slowly out o'er cattle-dotted plains,
The stream is strong and turbulent, and dark with heavy rains,
The laborer looks up to see our shallop speed away.
When shall the sandy bar be cross'd? When shall we find the bay?

Now are the clouds like fiery shrouds; the sun, superbly large,
Slow as an oak to woodman's stroke sinks flaming at their marge.
The waves are bright with mirror'd light as jacinths on our way.
When shall the sandy bar be cross'd? When shall we find the bay?

The moon is high up in the sky, and now no more we see
The spreading river's either bank, and surging distantly
There booms a sullen thunder as of breakers far away.
Now shall the sandy bar be cross'd, now shall we find the bay!

The seagull shrieks high overhead, and dimly to our sight
The moonlit crests of foaming waves gleam towering through the night
We'll steal upon the mermaid soon, and start her from her lay,
When once the sandy bar is cross'd, and we are in the bay.

What rises white and awful as a shroud-enfolded ghost?
What roar of rampant tumult bursts in clangor on the coast?
Pull back! pull back! The raging flood sweeps every oar away.
O stream, is this thy bar of sand? O boat, is this the bay?

The first stanza, representing the smooth stream, and the ready boat departing, may be taken to signify the first entering upon the struggle of life. The next stanza indicates the struggle, with its description of the violent stream and the dark water. The young man is impatient for success. By his desire to reach the bay, we may suppose, is meant his desire and hope for a time of comfort and peace as a reward of his toil. And everything promises well for him. The third stanza, describing sunset and its splendor, suggests the evening time of life;—and the calm desired has not yet been attained. The fourth stanza, with its description of night, and the enormous widening of the river, and the sound of the waves far away, suggests the approach of death—the time is nearing when all struggle must cease. But the man does not know: he is full of hope and full of impatience to attain his object. And in the fifth stanza, the high waves appear for the first time—shall we call them shadowings of death? In the sixth stanza the bar is crossed—that is to say, death comes suddenly, unexpectedly, and all is terrible. Vain now is hope. There is but a moment of agony and surprise;

and all is over.

A few words deserve notice. "Siren" in the second line of the first stanza is a word we found in reading Tennyson. You know that in Greek mythology the sirens were monsters with the faces of beautiful women, who devoured men. They had such sweet voices that when sailors heard them singing they would jump from their ships and swim to the shore where the sirens were. Then the sailors were killed and eaten. The use of this word in the very second line of the poem is sinister, and gives us the suspicion that something terrible is going to happen. All the descriptions which follow are very fine, but all are disquieting. Notice the adjectives "strong," "turbulent" and "dark" used to describe the stream; and observe the use of the word "shroud" in the first line of the third stanza. In that line we may take the shrouds to signify sails, great white sails in appearance. You know that the word "shroud" also signifies the sheet or wrapping in which a corpse is buried. The imagery of the last stanza is extremely powerful because it is extremely vague—nothing is clearly seen or heard; but everything is terrible and tumultuous. Such a poem haunts the imagination for a long time, after having been read.

Here I may close this lecture on the subject of symbolic and suggestive poetry. I must warn you that there is a great deal of nonsense to-day written under the name of symbolic poetry—metaphysical nonsense, philosophical nonsense, morbid nonsense of all kinds. I have tried to give you examples only of what is really symbolic poetry and suggestive poetry in the best modern sense. And I think that if you have time and inclination to study the subject further for yourselves you will find that in the best examples of this kind of English poetry there is a real inner relation to the spirit of the best Japanese poetry.

CHAPTER X

POEMS ON HEROIC SUBJECTS

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

THE afternoon lectures to be given in this class will chiefly consist of lectures and readings in poetry—though I hope to diversify this general plan in various ways. Why should we take poetry rather than prose? Because this class is especially a text-class; and the highest form of English literature furnishes the best texts for study. The highest form of every literature, ancient or modern, is poetry,—of course, I include drama in this statement, because the best of all Western dramas happens to be written in poetic form.

It would be very natural if you should ask, "Why poetry is a higher form of literature than prose?" That question has been asked by the most famous scholars and men of letters; and it is worth thinking about, although it is very hard to answer. Remember that I am speaking of Western literature only. One man who asked this question in our own time was Matthew Arnold—himself a good poet—but he declared that nobody could answer it. Another person who asked the question—a person whose name will hereafter be always related to studies in this University was Prof. Max Müller—certainly one of the greatest of modern scholars and a poet as well as a prose writer. He challenged the truth of Arnold's statement and dared to say that no such distinction as that usually made between poetry and prose ought to exist. He held that what can be done in verse might also be done in prose; and he boldly classed certain kinds of prose as true poetry. For the purpose of poetry is to express emotion more than anything else;—therefore we may well ask why should not emotion be equally well expressed

by good prose. The professor even went so far as to ask the poet Tennyson, "What is the use of rhyme?" Tennyson would not perhaps have answered such a question if it had been asked by a common person; but he knew that he was speaking with a greater scholar than himself, and he promptly replied, "To help the memory," and that is the true fact. The only use of rhyme is to help memory; what is more, we might say that the whole machinery of poetry—feet, pauses, accents, alliterations, stanzas—have no other original meaning than this. The purpose of all these forms is to help us to remember. Certainly rhyme is not necessary: the old Greeks, who wrote better poetry than the modern, scarcely used rhyme at all. The best of even English poetry is not in rhyme. And if there can be poetry without rhyme, can there not be poetry without measure of any fixed kind? Prof. Max Müller said, "Yes;"—others have said the same thing. Then why should it happen that the best of every Western literature from ancient time has been in verse? Is it because of some fashion, obliging people to put one class of thoughts and feelings into verse, and another class into prose? Partly perhaps—but not to any great extent. Is it because of a great example anciently made by the Greeks, and followed afterward by the rest of Europe? Scarcely—because we find the very same thing in literatures older than any European literature—Indian, Hebrew, Persian, for example. In every literature the same law prevails, the highest expression of sentiment takes the form of verse.

Therefore there must be something in verse which gives it a particular advantage over prose—or, rather, something which gave it such an advantage in ancient times, before prose became really developed. I think you know that literature began in many countries before writing had been invented; we call unwritten literature "oral literature;" that means mouth-literature or literature of the lips only. The heroic poems of Homer may have been composed and sung long before they were written down; and you know that this was the case in regard to old Arabian poetry. Probably

it was the case in most countries. And it was natural that this mouth-literature should take the shape of verse. All literature, written or unwritten, appears to have begun with song. Even to-day, among many tribes of men, who do not know how to write, the memory of great events is kept alive by means of songs—which are learned by heart, and taught by one generation to another. They can be remembered in this way because they have either measure or rhyme "to help the memory" as Tennyson said.

But this only explains an origin: it does not tell us why later poetry should be better than prose. No answer to this question can be very simple; there are too many reasons. But I venture to say that the chief reason is as follows:—the form of poetry everywhere obliges writers to take much more pains in choosing their words and in arranging their thoughts than it is necessary to take in prose. The value of poetical form has been the value of severe discipline. Under that discipline language has gained the best part of its strength and beauty.

But in the case of a language as perfect as English or French, could not the same discipline be applied to prose as to poetry? Certainly it could; and some excellent critics have declared that perfect prose is harder to write than perfect poetry. Indeed, this fact is well shown by a comparison of the bulk of prose with the bulk of poetry in any civilized literature. The amount of poetry is very small by comparison. A man may work for fifty years to produce one book of first-class poetry; in the same time he would have been able to write twenty-five or thirty first-class books of prose. Of course this fact argues that men take twenty-five times less pains with prose than with poetry. And why? Because the fashion has been set for ages to do the best that one can only in the case of verse. And this, again, has brought about such a differentiation in the methods of poetry and of prose that the same method of working towards perfection could not be adopted in the two cases. We might insist upon quite as careful

work in prose as in poetry; but the care could not now be directed to exactly the same ends. Perfect prose could not be just the same thing as perfect poetry. If you want to have an illustration—nothing is easier. Take, for example, a page of good poetry, and a page of good prose ; and then try which you can most quickly read and understand. The result will be that you will find the poetry at least twice, probably three times, as hard to read as prose. The reason is that the prose writer naturally aims above all things at being clear, easily understood; and he expresses himself in the most natural and direct way. But the poet must aim first of all at beauty ; his principal purpose is to bestir an emotion, and he is content to do that slowly, by any means of which words are capable. He turns the order of a sentence upside down—drops articles, relative pronouns, prepositions—leaves out every word that can be spared—tries to suggest even more than he says by obliging the reader to stop and think. A book of prose, constructed in the same way, would find few readers. Readers are impatient. They have become accustomed to read poetry; but they want the help of sound measure, rhyme or rhythm. Without such help they would feel as if in a theatre in which no music was permitted. The forms of poetry are really devices by which people are persuaded to read slowly and to think.

Nevertheless, I believe that, in some future time, when men can have obtained more culture than they have now, poetry may cease to exist in its present shape. For a beautiful emotion can be quite as well expressed—I should think even better expressed by melodious prose than by any kind of verse. Only, it would be necessary to give intense care to such prose. The poet Gray is said to have given fourteen years to the production of a little poem about four pages long;—who would give fourteen years to the production of four pages of prose? The example is an extreme one; but it illustrates all the better what I mean. Before the world gets tired of poetry in the form of verse, men must become willing to give just as much care to prose as ever

was given to the production of verse. Very possibly poetry is even now slowly preparing the human mind for some still higher future form of prose expression. And now for an illustration of the degree in which we find poetry pleasing and useful, I am going to dictate a famous poem in the form of plain prose; and after that we shall read the same thing in verse-form. It will be very short—but very striking. The poem is called "Home-Thoughts, from the Sea."

"The great shape of Cape St. Vincent stretched away in noble outline towards the north-west. The sun was setting; and his splendid blood-red light poured into the Bay of Cadiz—a glorious spectacle. Over the flaming sea I beheld before me Trafalgar a bluish shape. North-east, and far away—very dim—appeared the grand gray form of Gibraltar. As I looked from the deck of the ship at these famous places, I thought of what England had done for my sake at Trafalgar, at Cadiz, at Gibraltar. How she poured out her best blood, making this sea then as crimson as it is crimson now in the light of the setting sun. Then a great feeling of gratitude filled my heart; and I asked myself, "What can I do in return to help England to-day? You, whoever you are, who tonight in this place praise God and give thanks for England's victory, while you see the beautiful evening star hanging over the silent African coast—tell me, what shall I do?"

Now we will read the poem; it has the peculiarity of being "a single rhymed poem;" all the lines end with the same sound:—

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-West died away;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay;
Bluish mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay;
In the dimmest North-East distance, dawned Gibraltar grand and gray;
"Here and here did England help me: how can I help England?"—say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

If Browning had tried to write this thought and memory

in prose, could he have done it so well? Perhaps—but that would have meant very much greater labour. I doubt if he would have resigned himself to such labour. No ordinary man could give the same effect in prose at all: only a man of genius. Any ordinary attempt to paraphrase this is simply shocking—my own paraphrase is, of course, extremely bad. Moreover, in prose, many more words would have to be used, to make the same impression. How wonderful are the words in the poem!—every adverb and verb and adjective is carefully chosen to express two meanings. "Nobly" refers directly to the outline; but indirectly it refers to the memory of a noble victory—thus it expresses two things. The term "ran" in the second line applies apparently to the spectacle of sunlight upon the moving water: but when we get to the adjective "blood-red," we suddenly remember the great sea-fight. But the full strength of the line comes to our minds when we reach the tremendous words "reeking"—the word especially used for bloodshed. And the reference to Cadiz Bay brings with it the memory of great captains long before Nelson—the daring sea-men of Elizabeth's day, Drake and Essex. The next line is splendid only in colour, with its contrast of pale-blue and fiery-red; the fourth line is also coloured mostly—colours of mist and distance: both only serve to strengthen the force of the first two amazing lines. Then comes the surprise of the fine thought of gratitude—with the adjuration following. But the last line is not the least wonderful. The name Africa, with its effect of strangeness, reminds us of much more than geographical position:—even if it did not, the term "Jove's planet" would. The poet is referring to Jupiter as the evening star just seen over the African coast; but he speaks of it as the Romans did—and we suddenly remember that all this Africa and the Spanish peninsula opposite were once Roman; and that the might of England at sea has supplanted the power of Rome. So, while praising his country, and calling upon all Englishmen to do likewise, the poet also reminds us—by the mere use of one or two words—how really great she is, how justly one may

be proud of her. We know all this without Africa on reading the poem; because we expect a poem to be suggestive, and we look for surprises. But we would not look for them in prose, because we would not expect them. Yet, again there is another thing to notice. If this had been written in prose, could you remember the effect of it so well. Certainly not. You read this in verse; and you cannot forget because of the peculiar force of the words in their startling succession and the strong beauty of the single rhyme ending every verse. Now, at present, poetry is a great help to the memorizing of great thoughts; and it will be a very long time before men will have become wise enough and sensitive enough to do without it.

So ends our little introductory chat about the emotional value of poetry as form. And now we can well begin a series of exemplary studies of different kinds of poetry. The kind of which I have just given you a short example from Browning is not a bad kind to begin with—I mean poetry about heroic subjects and patriotic subjects. Although at first thought you might not feel attracted by subjects of foreign patriotism, on second thought you will certainly see that a knowledge of patriotic expression by foreign poets will almost certainly help to strengthen your own national sentiments, and to suggest new ways of fostering Japanese patriotism in drama or in song. And the first piece which I shall quote to you, you will find to have an element of common sympathy. It is a true story of a poor French fisherman who by an act of moral courage, once changed the course of French history.

HERVÉ RIEL

The time of this incident was the time of Louis XIV; and the battle referred to was very important—as it broke the power of the French at sea. Browning received one hundred pounds for the poem, i.e. about a thousand yen, according to the present value of money. When the poem was published in an English magazine, the French Naval

Department hastily said that the story was not true. But the poet insisted that it was true and the French Naval authorities went back to the old records of more than two hundred years ago. Then they found that Browning was right and that they were wrong. He had got the story in the little fishing-village of Croisic, in Brittany, where it was well remembered.

Now the kind of courage described in this poem is not a common kind—not simple courage that makes a good soldier or sailor, but moral courage which is a very different thing. Many a man who is not afraid to die in battle, may be afraid to put himself in opposition to the will of his commanders, and to face the anger of his comrades, for a purely moral reason. In this case a common sailor boldly goes into the presence of princes and admirals, and tells them that they are all wrong, and that they do not love their country as they ought to;—moreover, he dares to tell them that their advisers are liars and cowards—which was true. But only a very brave and very honest man would have done that. Everyone else had said that the French ships must be destroyed, because they could not be saved. Only one ignorant fisherman, a new sailor dared to shout out that they could be saved and that he could save them—which he did. The manner of telling the story in this poem is very true to life; for Browning lived among the fisher-folk of Brittany, and knew their tale by heart. We shall presently see that the colloquial expressions used in the poem are not exactly English. They are the English literal translation of the French colloquial; and this artistic trick makes the incidents seem very much more real.

I

On the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,
  Did the English fight the French,—woe to France!
And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter thro' the blue,
Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,
  Came crowding ship on ship to St. Malo on the Rance,
With the English fleet in view.

II

'T was the squadron that escaped, with the victors in full chase;
First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Damfreville;
Close on him fled, great and small,
Twenty-two good ships in all;
And they signalled to the place
"Help the winners of a race!
"Get us guidance, give us harbour, take us quick—or, quicker still,
"Here's the English can and will!"

III

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on board;
"Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass?" laughed they:
"Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage scarred and scored,
"Shall the '*Formidable*' here with her twelve and eighty guns
"Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow way,
"Trust to enter where 't is ticklish for a craft of twenty tons,
"And with flow at full beside?
"Now, 't is slackest ebb of tide.
"Reach the mooring? Rather say,
"While rock stands or water runs,
"Not a ship will leave the bay!"

The pilots of St. Malo ridiculed the idea of getting the great warships into the river-mouth out of danger. It cannot be done, they think. There are rocks to the right and rocks to the left; and all the way is full of danger—even for a little fishing-boat it would be "ticklish,"—that it is dangerous to pass even when the tide is full. But now the tide is at its very lowest: nobody could save the ships. (Note some of the terms or colloquialisms here used. First, "put out brisk" is a regular sailor's term: to put out is to leave the shore in a boat. "Twelve and eighty" is the nearest possible English rendering of the French "quatre-vingt-douze;" the modern French having no word for ninety, and substituting "four-twenty" for eighty. But Medieval French had a noun for ninety—nonante. The word "ticklish" is also a sailor's word—signifying dangerous; but it is used

a great deal now by all classes in England and America. A "ticklish place" means a dangerous place. "Slack tide" is equivalent to low tide; but the original meaning is not the same. "Slack," probably means "loose," not tight—as we say of a rope, which had not been tightly stretched. "It is too slack" from signifying "loose," came to mean weak; and "slack tide" probably means a low tide during the time the current of the sea is weak or slack.)

IV

Then was called a council straight.
Brief and bitter the debate:
"Here 's the English at our heels; would you have them take in tow
"All that's left us of the fleet, linked together stern and bow,
"For a prize to Plymouth Sound?
"Better run the ships aground!"
(Ended Damfreville his speech).
Not a minute more to wait!
"Let the Captains all and each
"Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the beach!
"France must undergo her fate.

V

"Give the word!" But no such word
Was ever spoke or heard;
For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all these
—A Captain? A Lieutenant? A Mate—first, second, third?
No such man of mark, and meet
With his betters to compete!
But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for the fleet,
A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

VI

And, "What mockery or malice have we here?" cries Hervé Riel:
"Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards, fools, or rogues?
"Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the soundings, tell
"On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell
"'Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river disembogues?
"Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying 's for?
"Morn and eve, night and day,

"Have I piloted your bay,
"Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.
"Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse than fifty Hogues!
"Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe me there 's a way!
"Only let me lead the line,
"Have the biggest ship to steer,
"Get this '*Formidable*' clear,
"Make the others follow mine,
"And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know well,
"Right to Solidor past Grève,
"And there lay them safe and sound;
"And if one ship misbehave,
"—Keel so much as grate the ground,
"Why, I 've nothing but my life,—here 's my head!" cries Hervé Riel.

The admiral, finding no pilot, called his officers in council, and after a short and very painful discussion, Damfreville says, "I do not see any help for it. The English are right behind us. If they catch us, they will take all the ships as prizes, and tow them into Plymouth—do you want that shameful thing to happen? No—then we must run the ships ashore and blow them up or burn them. It cannot be helped." But the word of command to destroy the ships was not given, because a man suddenly came forward and interrupted the council of the officers. Perhaps you think that this man was at least a captain, or a lieutenant, or a first-mate, or a second-mate, or a third-mate. But he was not. He was only a poor Breton pilot, who had been pressed into the service as a common sailor. ("To press" means to force a man to do duty as a sailor by law, against his will.) And he cried out, "What folly or what wickedness is this, you people of Malo. You may tell these officers, who do not know the river-mouth—you can tell them lies. But you cannot tell lies to me, because I know every inch of the way. I have passed through night and day hundreds of times. It is said that people lie for love and for money—are you telling lies for the sake of English

money? Or are you lying just because you love to lie?" This is very rough language; but it is the rough language of a brave and honest man, made angry by the cowardice and untruthfulness of other men who do not realize the duty which they owe to their country. And, remember, this Hervé Riel has no particular reason to be grateful to the government, which took him away by force from his home, and obliged him to fight without wages. But he is too good a man to feel the least selfishness, when the country is in danger. And he turns to the officers passionately and cries, "Don't listen to those liars—trust me: I can save you. You have nothing to risk by trusting me. Give me the biggest ship, the admiral's ship and order the other ships to follow me; and I will steer you out of danger. If anything happens—if a single accident happens—then you can cut off my head: is not that a good bargain for you?" And the great admiral knows—not by argument, but by the look of the honest face that this man can save them. So they put him in charge of the whole fleet. I suppose you know that when a pilot takes charge, the captain's authority stops. So, for that one day, this poor fisher-pilot was actually in command of the whole French fleet. ("To run aground" is to run a ship, i.e. to sail her, so that she goes upon the beach and sticks there. Notice the third line of the fifth verse—a curious construction, but immensely energetic "for up stood, for out stepped, for in struck"—the man stood up from the place where he had been sitting and listening, then he stepped out:—to "step out," in naval language, means to come forward;—and in presence of the council he strikes in, i.e. interrupts the discussion. To "strike in," is a very common colloquial phrase for "to interrupt." "Malouins," a French form of name for the people of the little town of St. Malo alone. "Disembogues," discharges. A river is said to disembogue at a place where it discharges its waters into the sea. "Get clear" is a sailor's expression; "to get clear a ship" means to get her safely through the mouth of a river or harbour or between other ships that happen to be moored in the way.)

VII

Not a minute more to wait.
"Steer us in, then, small and great!
  "Take the helm, lead the line, sail the squadron!" cried its chief.
Captains, give the sailor place!
  He is Admiral, in brief.
Still the north-wind, by God's grace!
See the noble fellow's face
As the big ship, with a bound,
Clears the entry like a hound,
Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide sea's profound!
  See, safe thro' shoal and rock,
  How they follow in a flock,
Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the ground,
  Not a spar that comes to grief!
The peril, see, is past,
All are harboured to the last,
And just as Hervé Riel hollas "Anchor!"—sure as fate
Up the English come, too late!

VIII

So, the storm subsides to calm:
  They see the green trees wave
  On the heights o'erlooking Grève.
Hearts that bled are stanched with balm.
"Just our rapture to enhance,
  "Let the English rake the bay,
"Gnash their teeth and glare askance
  "As they cannonade away!
"'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance!"
How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's countenance!
Out burst all with one accord,
    "This is Paradise for Hell!
    "Let France, let France's King
    "Thank the man that did the thing!"
What a shout, and all one word,
  "Hervé Riel!"
As he stepped in front once more,
  Not a symptom of surprise

In the frank blue Breton eyes,
Just the same man as before.

He cannot wait a moment longer—so, "Steer us in if you can," the admiral says to Riel. "Captains, give up your command to this man;—he is now commander of the fleet for the time being. Fortunately for us through the mercy of God, the wind is still from the north—not against us!" Ah! that was wonderfully done!—Look at that man's fine face! He does not even seem to know what a wonderful thing he is doing, as he makes this great ship leap through the narrow passage, just as a hunting-dog might leap through a hole in a fence! And the ship could not have more than an inch of room to spare. But she went on as smoothly as if she had the whole sea on each side of her. And all the other ships followed just as well—not a single accident—not one scraping of a bottom on the rocks—not even one spar broken or damaged. Now the danger is all over—every ship is safely in; and, as we expected, just as Riel shouts to anchor, the English come in sight. They are too late!

After the excitement, now everything is quiet again. The French sailors are happy;—they look up at the green trees on the river banks above them;—they are like wounded men who have been well cared for. And they say:—"What does it matter if the English now keep shooting into the bay—they cannot hurt us; and it is rather amusing to see how angry they are with disappointment. The great fort above us can protect us very well from them. But we must not forget the man who saved us—we must thank him—the government must thank him! Call him!" And he is called. But he does not seem to know that he has done anything beyond his duty. He is not in the least embarassed, and not in the least proud—just as natural as ever, and he looks straight into the face of the admiral without the slightest appearance of shyness or of vanity.

("To misbehave," when used of a ship, means "to become unmanageable." "Comes to grief"—this expression means

to become badly injured or broken, when applied to *things*. When applied to *persons* it means to suffer misfortunes. "Rake" is an old military and naval term, signifying to sweep a certain zone, or surface, with a storm of shot; the lines of shot running so parallel that, if drawn, they would give the appearance of lines made with a rake upon the ground. Observe that the poet speaks of blue eyes as being particularly Breton. I suppose you know that the people of Brittany are not, strictly speaking, French at all,—though Brittany is a French province. Like the Irish or Welsh, the Britons are Celts; and they still preserve their ancient language, which has not the least possible resemblance to French —though, in the towns, both languages are spoken. Blue or gray eyes, with or without dark hair, are much more common among the Celts of Brittany than among the French.)

IX

Then said Damfreville, "My friend,
"I must speak out at the end,
  "Though I find the speaking hard.
"Praise is deeper than the lips:
"You have saved the King his ships,
  "You must name your own reward.
"'Faith our sun was near eclipse!
"Demand whate'er you will,
"France remains your debtor still.
"Ask to heart's content and have! or my name's not Damfreville."

X

Then a beam of fun outbroke
On the bearded mouth that spoke,
As the honest heart laughed through
Those frank eyes of Breton blue:
"Since I needs must say my say,
  "Since on board the duty 's done,
  "And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it but

a run?—
"Since 't is ask and have, I may—
"Since the others go ashore—
"Come! A good whole holiday!
"Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle Aurore!"
That he asked and that he got,—nothing more.

Then the admiral said to the common sailor addressing him as an equal—and you must remember Damfreville was a great nobleman:—"My friend, I must, now, at last speak to you—though I find it very difficult to tell you how I feel. Please remember that I feel more grateful to you than any words can say; for you have saved the French fleet. In truth we were very nearly being destroyed. You must name your own reward; and no matter what you may ask for—and no matter what we may give you,—France will always consider herself indebted to you for this day. Now, do not be ashamed—tell me whatever you would like to have; and I swear to you you shall get it." But at these words, the honest sailor only laughed good-humoredly, and answered straight:—"Well since I must say something,—and since the duty on board is finished, and all the other sailors will be allowed to go on shore,—and since from this place to my home it is only a short distance—why, I will ask this: Let me go home for one whole day, and see my wife, whom I call Beautiful Dawn." That was all he asked for; and that was all that the government ever gave him. (Only Browning did not know this—the government exempted him from naval service for the rest of his life.)

("A run"—this is a regular pilot's term, meaning a single quick course from one point to another: a pilot, in olden times, used to charge payment by the "run." "Go ashore"—still used in the navy—signifies the sailor's going on shore by permission—permission not being given at every port, nor upon frequent occasions. Observe how very careful the man is not to ask for anything that would seem to make him more favoured than his fellow-sailors: all can go

ashore, so he can go ashore too; but all cannot go home, and the right to go home for one day seems to him all the favour that he has a right to ask. The "Come," with the exclamation mark immediately afterwards, seems a little rude in English; but it is the best possible English rendering of the French "Allons!" which, in this place, would only have the force of "Very well, then!")

Perhaps it would seem to you strange that the sailor speaks affectionately of his wife—even in a jocose way to the great admiral. But this is a splendid human touch on the part of the poet;—it is exactly what such a man would do under the circumstances out of the sincerity of his heart;—it is only his way of telling the admiral that his wife is in fear about him as she knows that he has been in the battle. Therefore he wants to see her. Again, you must remember that French people especially are very frank in talking about their homes, and their families,—no soldier, for example, would be ashamed to speak of his wife or children to a friendly officer, at a proper time: that would only be a reason for sympathy between them. But this is not imagination on the part of the poet at all. The French government records declare that "this poor man only asked to go to see his wife (qu'on nommait la Belle Aurore)." This gives a slightly different meaning; the French phrase exactly means "the woman that was called the Belle Aurore." It would seem that she was known among the country people by that name, not that it was given to her by her husband. Aurore is still a common name among the French people—a name that we can trace very far back into old Roman times. And in the country parts of France a handsome woman, or a handsome man is apt to be known by her or his name pre-fixed with the word Belle, or Bel, according to sex. Thus you will often see, in studies of French country life, such appelations as la Belle Jeanne or le Bel Alphonse, or le Beau Pasquier. So it is probable that Riel's wife was very well known in the country as a fine woman; and the government records ought to be good authority for the statement that she was called

la Belle Aurore.

XI

Name and deed alike are lost:
Not a pillar nor a post
  In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell;
Not a head in white and black
On a single fishing smack,
In memory of the man but for whom had gone to wrack
  All that France saved from the fight whence England bore the bell.
Go to Paris: rank on rank
  Search the heroes flung pell-mell
On the Louvre, face and flank!
  You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé Riel.
So for better and for worse,
Hervé Riel, accept my verse!
In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more
Save the squadron, honour France, love thy wife the Belle Aurore!

The name of the man and the recollection of what he did are forgotten. In his own native village there is not even a pillar nor a wooden post with an inscription to record his great action—to keep the memory of it alive. In that fishing village there are plenty of fishing boats with figureheads, painted black and white; but no one ever thought of putting either the head or the name of this hero on a boat—although had it not been for him France would have lost every ship in her fleet. If you do go to Paris, visit that great art-gallery of the Louvre; and look there at all the pictures—hundreds of pictures—representing the heroes of France. No matter how long you look you will not find a single picture of Hervé Riel. Look at the statues of the front and at the sides of the building—you will not find any statue of him. Therefore I thus now speak to his spirit:—"Hervé Riel, my poetry may not be very good; but it is meant to praise you—so please accept it, whether it is good or bad, as my little tribute of honour and admiration! In my verse, do you once save the French fleet, the honour of France, your country, and confess your affec-

tion for your wife whom people call 'La Belle Aurore!' "

("Smack"—a common term for fishing vessels, both in England and America. Sometimes we say "fishing smack" but often we say only "smack." "To bear the bell" is a common expression for winning a victory or a prize. "Pell-mell": this expression means a disorderly manner or heaped together upside down. In speaking of the building, the word "face" means the front of course; but we more generally use the French term "façade" which has been adopted into English.)

Two hundred years since, but most of our English poems of heroism relate to matters much more modern. There is just as much courage now as there ever was; and the world of to-day probably has quite as many heroes as it had two hundred or two thousand years ago. Indeed, I sometimes think that there are more heroes now than ever before; only we do not talk so much about them, and thousands of brave and noble things are not heard of outside of certain small circles. Brave men and heroes do not like to talk about what they do; but in old times—in Scandinavia, for example—a hero was obliged to talk about himself, and to make songs about his own great deeds. The heroes of Homer acted in the same way. But the bravest man of to-day may do things quite as great as any of Homer's heroes and never obtain any recognition or reward for it. So I find that it is not always the best things that have inspired the best modern poetry about heroism. We are more impressed by immense facts than by small ones—more impressed by the sacrifice of thousands than by the sacrifice of tens. Yet the smaller sacrifice may be the greater of the two. Everybody knows the story of the Light Brigade—there were about six hundred men in that charge. Everybody has heard of the still greater and much more terrible charge of the cuirassiers at Reichshofen. Everybody has heard of the loss of the troop-ship Birkenhead on board of which a thousand English soldiers drawn up in rank on deck, went down with the vessel, firing their own funeral volley just before the water closed above

their heads. A peculiarly terrible thing about this catastrophe was that the ship was surrounded by hundreds of great sharks waiting to devour the soldiers. Well, as I said, these things become more widely known, because of the numbers of persons sacrificed – because of the multitude of lives lost. Yet a dozen men may be quite as much of heroes as the thousands of French cavalry who perished under the fire of German artillery at Reichshofen or the six hundred English cavalry who attacked a Russian battery to no purpose. You know that the latter fact was caused by a mistake—a foolish order. Well, another foolish order given by a commander in Northern India many years ago produced just as wonderful a display of courage; but there were only eleven men killed. These eleven men have been celebrated by a poet—not a Tennyson, but a very good poet; and I think you will find them well worthy of praise. The main point of the poem, however,—the particular thing to which I wish to call your attention,—is that the enemies of those men praised them before the poet did. The highest possible praise is not from one's friend: it is the praise which an enemy gives. Whoever wins such praise as that may certainly be called a hero in the best sense.

The facts in the case were these:—a general in Afghanistan, commanding an English division, sent orders to a company to capture a fortress upon the top of the mountain, which was held by a strong force of the enemy. The fortress was considered impregnable, and should have been attacked only with the greatest caution, and the help of artillery. But the subordinate who first received the order did not understand, and he simply told ten soldiers and a sergeant to take the fort. In other words, they were told to do the impossible. But they went straight up the mountain to the wall of the fort, where they were all killed. After they were killed, their bodies were stripped and thrown down; but the Afghans first gave them the highest honour which a warrior could receive,—tying a red cord round both wrists of each man. The poem tells the rest. It was written by Sir Francis

Doyle, the author of several heroic poems. I shall quote only the first parts:

THE RED THREAD OF HONOUR

Eleven men of England
  A breast-work charged in vain;
Eleven men of England
  Lie stripp'd, and gash'd, and slain.
Slain; but of foes that guarded
  Their rock-built fortress well.
Some twenty had been master'd,
  When the last soldier fell.

The robber-chief mused deeply,
  Above those daring dead;
"Bring here," at length he shouted,
  "Bring quick, the battle thread.
Let Eblis blast for ever
  Their souls, if Allah will:
But WE must keep unbroken
  The old rules of the Hill.

* * *

"Still, when a chief dies bravely,
  We bind with green *one* wrist—
Green for the brave, for heroes
  ONE crimson thread we twist.
Say ye, oh gallant Hillmen,
  For these, whose life has fled,
Which is the fitting colour,
  The green one, or the red?"

"Our brethren, laid in honour'd graves, may wear
  Their green reward," each noble savage said;
"To these, whom hawks and hungry wolves shall tear,
  Who dares deny the red?"

Thus conquering hate, and stedfast to the right,
  Fresh from the heart that haughty verdict came;
Beneath a waning moon, each spectral height
  Roll'd back its loud acclaim.

Once more the chief gazed keenly
  Down on those daring dead;
From his good sword their heart's blood
  Crept to that crimson thread.
Once more he cried, "The judgment,
  Good friends, is wise and true,
But though the red *be* given,
  Have we not more to do?

"These were not stirr'd by anger,
  Nor yet by lust made bold;
Renown they thought above them,
  Nor did they look for gold.
To them their leader's signal
  Was as the voice of God:
Unmoved, and uncomplaining,
  The path it show'd they trod.

"As, without sound or struggle,
  The stars unhurrying march,
Where Allah's finger guides them,
  Through yonder purple arch,
These Franks, sublimely silent,
  Without a quicken'd breath,
Went, in the strength of duty,
  Straight to their goal of death.

"If I were now to ask you,
  To name our bravest man,
Ye all at once would answer,
  They call'd him Mehrab Khan.
He sleeps among his fathers,
  Dear to our native land,
With the bright mark he bled for
  Firm round his faithful hand.

"The songs they sing of Roostum
  Fill all the path with light;
If truth be in their music,
  He was a noble knight.

But were those heroes living,
And strong for battle still,
Would Mehrab Khan or Roostum
Have climb'd, like these, the Hill?"

Because it was known to be certain death, he asks the question. Even the bravest man does not care to throw his life away to no purpose; and the great heroes mentioned, being themselves free to do as they pleased, would not have climbed the hill unless they wished to die in vain. But here was a fact of another kind: those foreign soldiers knew that they were going to die, and that their death would be of no use at all. Nevertheless they had received an order, and that it was their duty to obey that order. The courage of military obedience may be even greater than the courage which makes men famous. For the first time these Afghans, who have always been at once the bravest and yet the most disobedient of soldiers—even their own princes find it nearly impossible to make them obey—observed this kind of courage, which surpassed them and bestirred their honest admiration. And this was their reply:—

And they replied, "Though Mehrab Khan was brave,
As chief, he chose himself what risks to run;
Prince Roostum lied, his forfeit life to save,
Which these had never done."

Rustum, or Roostum, as the poet spells the name, is the hero of the great epic poem of Persia. In the *Shahnama*, or "Book of Kings," there is a record also of his many exploits. Matthew Arnold took the story of this hero for the subject of a poem; and in Matthew Arnold's poem you will find some reference to the subject; by which the Prince once saved his life in a moment of danger. The expression "forfeit life" signifies a life already forfeited, or lost, by right of battle. The Prince had been fairly conquered; and his enemy had the right to kill him—but he saved himself by an untruth. . . . Thus we see that the Afghans by general consent, pronounced these Englishmen braver than even their own heroes, and

therefore more worthy of honour. And the chief decided so to honour:—

"Enough!" he shouted fiercely;
"Doom'd though they be to hell,
Bind fast the crimson trophy
Round BOTH wrists—bind it well.
Who knows but that great Allah
May grudge such matchless men,
With none so deck'd in heaven,
To the fiends' flaming den?"

Then all those gallant robbers
Shouted a stern "Amen!"
They raised the slaughter'd sergeant,
They raised his mangled ten.
And when we found their bodies
Left bleaching in the wind,
Around BOTH wrists in glory
That crimson thread was twined.

The words of the chief may need a little explanation. According to the Mohammedan religion, only believers can be saved, and foreigners who do not believe in the Prophet must go to hell after they die. Therefore this chief says of them. "I suppose they may have to go to hell—these dead foreigners; but that is no reason why we should refuse to them the tribute of bravery. None of our fathers have ever had the red thread tied round both wrists; and perhaps when God sees the dead bodies of these men so honoured, he will refuse to let them go to hell—since he has no such men, perhaps, in his own paradise."

Further explanation is not necessary except perhaps in the case of the word "mangled" which, in case of a dead body, means much more than wounded or cut; it means all cut up and disfigured. As a matter of fact, the Afghans generally cut up the bodies of their enemies after victory, much in the same way that the Chinese did during the late war. But that was only a war custom with the Afghans; and they did not prevent their honouring the dead as well as mangl-

ing them. The story was told by the English general Sir Charles Napier.

Poems of this class exist of course in the literature of every nation; and yet you may find it a little surprising that the number of really great short poems on heroes and patriots is not large. The reason is that great poets generally treat of such matters in epic form—which you know is very long; and lesser poets, wishing to appeal to the people at large on behalf of a hero, usually adopt the ballad form which does not often rise to the height of great poetry. So, of the thousands of European poems of this character, the majority are ballads or epics (and they are unsuited for illustrated use in a lecture). I might interest you by quoting a ballad about a German trumpeter which exactly repeats the familiar story of the Japanese trumpeter; or I might quote to you a striking ballad about the French sentry who, being surprised at his post by the enemy, and ordered to keep silence on pain of death, nevertheless shouted the alarm, and saved his country by the sacrifice of his life. But, noble as is the story, the poetry is not of the finest and I want to give you examples of only the best short work. This will probably confine me to the use of about four pieces more,—the next brings us to Switzerland. The story is the story of Winkelried, who in the fourteenth century secured the independence of Switzerland by voluntarily sacrificing his life in battle. It was a strange battle—known in history as the battle of Sempach. The Austrians were all clad in steel from head to foot—every man like a statue of iron: it was the age in which armour had obtained its greatest perfection. All these iron-men formed a prodigious square, or phalanx, using long spears—the spears of the men behind reaching over the shoulders of the men in front—so that between every two men there were four or five spears to help them while they used their own. And against this tremendous array, there were only some thousands of half naked peasants, mountaineers, herders, hunters, fighting for their liberty and their country. The odds were very great; but hunters, and men

of that class are generally very quick to see an advantage in war; and they soon saw one thing, namely,—that if they could only break into the square at any point they could win the battle; for they could strike harder and move more quickly than the men in armour. For a long time they tried to break the square in vain. Then one strong man, Arnold von Winkelried, shouted; "If you follow me, and climb over me, you can break the square." He then ran forward and seized ten spears in his arms. Of course every spear went through his body. But he held fast; and before they could draw their spears out of his body again, his comrades climbed over him, into the square, and began the terrible slaughter that ended the battle and won the independence of Switzerland. That was a very grand feat of individual heroism. It was imitated in modern times—once, I believe, at Waterloo, when the French cavalry attacked an English square successfully. One brave soldier blindfolded his horse, and made the animal leap on the bayonets of the infantry. Both he and the horse were instantly killed; but his comrades leaped over him into the square and destroyed it within a few moments. The case of Winkelried more impresses us, because of the great consequences, the political liberty of Switzerland. It was an astonishing example of what the death of one man could accomplish for his country. Of course there have been a great many poems written about that action. One of them, by Montgomery, I think you know, as it is to be found in many anthologies—beginning with the words:

> "Make way for liberty!" he cried,
> Made way for liberty, and died.

But this is not by any means the best of the compositions. It is written much in the style of Sir Walter Scott's earlier verse. Very much better is the poem by Walter Thornbury. From this poem we can make some good quotations. In the opening we have a description of the two armies; and the description is supposed to be made by the

Swiss who took part in the battle against Archduke Leopold. When the Swiss saw the army coming, the signal was given by blowing horns on all the mountain tops.

The young and old from fair Lucerne gathered to bar the way,
The reapers threw their sickles down, and ran to join the fray:

* * *

Burghers of Berne, the lads of Schweitz, and Unterwalden's best,
Warriors of Uri, strong as bulls, were there among the rest;
The oldest of our mountain priests had come to fight,—not pray,
Our women only kept at home upon that battle-day.

The shepherds, sturdy wrestlers with the grim mountain bear,
The chamois hunters, lithe and swift, mingle together there;
Rough boatmen from the mountain lakes, and fishermen by scores;
The children only had been left to guard the nets and oars.
The herdsmen joined us from their huts on the far mountain-side,
Where cow-bells chimed among the pines, and far above in pride
The granite peaks rose soaring up in snowy pinnacles,
Past glaciers' ever-gaping jaws and vultures' citadels.

Such was indeed the bulk of the Swiss army—hunters, shepherds, herders, fishermen; but there were among them some citizen groups from the towns. However, the heavy fighting was chiefly done by the peasants. Yet it was a kind of fighting which took them by surprise—a kind of fighting in which strength and bravery seem to be set at naught by the machine-discipline of the iron-clad:—

How fierce we ran with partisan and axe and spear and sword,
With flail and club and shrieking horns, upon that Austrian horde!
But they stood silent in the sun, mocking the Switzer bear,
Their helmets crested, beaked, and fanged, like the wild beasts that they were.

Like miners digging iron ore from some great mountain heart,
We strove to hew and rend and cleave that hill of steel apart;
But clamped like statues stood the knights in their spiked phalanx strong,
Though our Swiss halberds and our swords hewed fiercely at the throng.

Hot, sharp, and thick our arrows fell upon their helmet crests,
Keen on their visors' glancing bars, and sharp upon their breasts;
Fierce plied our halberds at the spears, that thicker seemed to grow:
The more we struck, more boastfully the banners seemed to blow.

"We rushed upon the enemy fiercely with all kinds of weapons, sounding our horns; but the Austrians stood in silence mocking the strength of Switzerland, and looking with their fantastic crested helmets, like some strange and horrible kind of beasts—and, in their hearts, they were beasts indeed! But we could do nothing against them for a long time. It was like working at a mountain of iron,—like trying to break out ore. Those men, in their armour, seemed to be clamped to the ground and to each other; and we could not cut into them. We shot at them, so that our arrows fell upon them thick as hail;—we tried to cut through the spear-shafts with our halberds. But all this made no impression,—the more that we cut the spears, the more spears there appeared to be to cut."

Notice in the second of the above three stanzas, the fine use of words relating to metal. "Clamp" means to fasten together with a band of iron; and a finer word could not have been chosen to express the fixing of the knight's ranks.

So the fight continued;—the enemy always slowly advancing as a mountain might move with the pressure of an earthquake behind it. Then Winkelried devoted himself to the cause of victory.

Till Winkelried stepped forth, and said, knitting his rugged brow,
"Out on ye, men of Zurich town! go back and tend your plough;
Sluggards of Berne, go hunt and fish, when danger is not nigh;
See now how Unterwalden taught her hardy sons to die!"

Then out he rushed with head bent low; his body, breast, and hands
Bore down a sheaf of spears, and made a pathway for our bands.
Four lances splintered on his brow, six shivered in his side,
But still he struggled fiercely on, and, shouting "Victory!" died.

Then on that broken flying rout, we Swiss, rejoicing, rushed,

With sword and mace and partisan that struck and stabbed and crushed;
Their banners beaten to the earth, and all their best men slain,
The Austrians threw away their shields and fled across the plain.

("Out on ye!" is an old English expression signifying "For shame!" In referring to the attitude of Winkelried, in rushing forward, you may remark that the poet describes him as running with his head down,—of course he bent his head, covered by a helmet probably, only because if any of the spears were to strike him directly in the face, he could not have reached the phalanx. In the third line of the same stanza you may notice the word "shivered;"—it does not mean "trembled," but means broken into very small pieces.)

The foregoing poem has very considerable merit as a strong ringing composition. Yet I am not sure whether it is not more easy to describe the act of a hero in battle, than the act of a heroine—a woman, able to help her country only by gentler and unobtrusive means. Certainly the next poem which I shall quote represents a very much higher art than this poem of Winkelried. And it is only the story of a poor Italian peasant girl, who risked her life to save a patriot. The poem is simply entitled, "The Italian in England." The Italian is relating, in exile, a memory of his youth. I suppose you know that in the early part of the nineteenth century, a great deal of Italy was under Austrian rule, and that it would be still under Austrian rule but for the unselfish efforts of great patriots—earnest men, many of whom gave up their lives in order to free their country. Many of these men, besides the statesmen, were men of rank and learning. Prices were actually put upon the heads of some. Some of these men fled to England, some to France, and earned an honourable living as teachers, artists, musicians. English literature, for example, owes to this episode in history the contribution of the Rossetti family. Of course there were thousands of poor folks too, who were patriots and refugees. But Browning has properly chosen for poetical use the story of a refugee

of a noble class. Nearly all the great English poets of the Victorian period strongly sympathized with the Italian patriots;—indeed English sympathy very much helped toward the freeing of Italy. And the greatest of their statesmen, Mazzini, used to read and translate this poem to his Italian friends, to show them how well an Englishman could sympathize with the patriots. The poem opens with the speaker's account of how he had to hide from the Austrian police with a price upon his head:—

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

That second time they hunted me
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
And Austria, hounding far and wide
Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,
Breathed hot and instant on my trace.—
I made, six days, a hiding-place
Of that dry green old aqueduct
Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked
The fire-flies from the roof above,
Bright creeping thro' the moss they love:
—How long it seems since Charles was lost!
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
The country in my very sight;
And when that peril ceased at night,
The sky broke out in red dismay
With signal-fires. Well, there I lay
Close covered o'er in my recess,
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
Thinking on Metternich our friend,
And Charles's miserable end,
And much beside, two days; the third,
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
The peasants from the village go
To work among the maize . . .

The first mention of six days refers to the whole time during which he had to hide in the weeds;—he lay there the first two days without food—not daring to move; but the third day when he heard the peasants passing by to work,

he had become so hungry that he ventured to seek for help. The reference to Metternich is, of course, ironical; and the word "friend" really means deadly enemy;—Metternich, as you know, was the Austrian prime minister, and bitterly hated by every Italian patriot. But Charles, the friend of the speaker, and his playmate in boyhood, had become a traiter to his country. That is the meaning of the word "lost." Now while the man is hiding in the aqueduct in ruins—he remembers that when he was a boy, he and Charles used to go there to catch fireflies; and it was just through that memory of childhood that he knew how to find so good a hiding place. Nothing else needs explanation except the word "instant" in the fifth line, which signifies without delay, without respite. "Hot and instant" means that the pursuit was fierce and uninterrupted.

In the lines which follow there is a pretty study of human nature; but I will not dictate it as I am obliged to curtail. The substance, however, is this:—

The man watches the peasants from his hiding place, wishing to speak; but his instinct tells him to let all the men and boys go by, and to wait for the women. Danger tells him that he can trust the woman's heart better. And he waits. Presently the women come—one, two, three, ten—twenty: still he hesitates, until it is almost too late. Then, quickly, he takes off one of his gloves and throws it at the last of the procession, a tall girl, who has the good sense to stoop down quietly, and pick it up and hide it in her bosom, without saying anything. Then she goes straight on to her work. But the fugitive, hiding in the aqueduct, knows very well that she will come back again when opportunity offers. She does not yet know what is wanted of her. And he thinks to himself: "When she comes back, I must tell her a lie, in order to get her help. What lie shall I tell her? She is a young girl; and girls sympathize with lovers. Suppose I tell her that I am hiding here because of some trouble that I got into on account of a love affair." But at that moment, the girl comes back; and when he looks straight into her

face, he finds that he cannot, dare not, tell her a lie; and he utters the whole truth, heedless of his life.

But when I saw that woman's face,
Its calm simplicity of grace,
Our Italy's own attitude
In which she walked thus far, and stood,
Planting each naked foot so firm,
To crush the snake and spare the worm—
At first sight of her eyes, I said,
"I am that man upon whose head
"They fix the price, because I hate
"The Austrians over us; the State
"Will give you gold—oh, gold so much!—
"If you betray me to their clutch,
"And be your death, for aught I know,
"If once they find you saved their foe.
"Now, you must bring me food and drink,
"And also paper, pen, and ink
"And carry safe what I shall write
"To Padua, which you 'll reach at night
"Before the duomo shuts; go in,
"And wait till Tenebræ begin;
"Walk to the third confessional,
"Between the pillar and the wall,
"And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*
"Say it a second time, then cease;
"And if the voice inside returns,
"*From Christ and Freedom; what concerns*
"*The cause of Peace?*—for answer, slip
"My letter where you placed your lip;
"Then come back happy we have done
"Our mother service—I, the son,
"As you the daughter of our land!"

The full meaning of the emotion here expressed deserves a little comment. When the woman comes back, she does not go straight to where the man is lying, but only to where the glove has been thrown, and stands there, and looks at him. And all her attitude, full of strength and dignity, signifies, "Do not dare to attempt any nonsense with me;

but tell me at once what you want." The reference to the killing of the snake, and the sparing of the worm strongly paints this firm character—and, by the way, you should here remember, that in the Italian paintings of the mother, she is represented as crushing a snake under her naked foot. Just what the line signifies is this,—the girl is kind-hearted enough not to hurt even an insect, but she would not be afraid even to kill a man if it were necessary to defend her virtue. And that is exactly the kind of woman that can best help him—brave and kind. So he tells her everything, and reminds her only that it is not for his sake, but for the sake of Italy, that the help is needed.

Make a note only on some unfamiliar terms. "Duomo," a cathedral—this word is closely allied to the English "dome." "Tenebræ," a particular church service, celebrated during Holy Week. As the name implies, the service has reference to the legendary darkness which happened at the death of Christ. "Confessional" is the private cabinet, in which confessions are heard; and the phrase "where you placed your lip" refers to the window through which the penitent whispers his or her confession to the priest inside.

Three mornings more she took her stand
In the same place, with the same eyes:
I was no surer of sun-rise
Than of her coming: we conferred
Of her own prospects, and I heard
She had a lover—stout and tall,
She said—then let her eyelids fall,
"He could do much"—as if some doubt
Entered her heart,—then, passing out,
"She could not speak for others, who
"Had other thoughts; herself she knew:"
And so she brought me drink and food.
After four days, the scouts pursued
Another path; at last arrived
The help my Paduan friends contrived
To furnish me: she brought the news.
For the first time I could not choose

But kiss her hand, and lay my own
Upon her head—"This faith was shown
"To Italy, our mother; she
"Uses my hand and blesses thee!"
She followed down to the sea-shore;
I left and never saw her more.

There is a very fine touch of strong character here also. The refugee naturally asks her if she does not know any man whom she can trust—because he thinks that she is undergoing a great deal of fatigue for his sake—she is doing what only a strong man ought to be asked to do. She acknowledges that she has a sweetheart; and yet, though she loves him, she will not risk another man's life by telling even him. So she answers, "I do not know what other people think;—I only know my own heart well." A finer answer could not have been given. And the stern reserve of the girl is such that the man whom she helps dares only at the last moment to express his thanks demonstratively by kissing her hand—an act expressing humility,—and by blessing her, for which he feels obliged to apologize—reminding her that it is Italy, not he, who thanks her. Two such characters would certainly make an excellent match—notwithstanding the fact that he is a statesman, and she only a poor peasant girl. But the finest part of the poem is to come—the close,—from which we can guess at the secret thoughts of the speaker. He has been many years in exile; and he can think of only three things in the world worth wishing for:—

How very long since I have thought
Concerning—much less wished for—aught
Beside the good of Italy,
For which I live and mean to die!
I never was in love; and since
Charles proved false, what shall now convince
My inmost heart I have a friend?
However, if I pleased to spend
Real wishes on myself—say, three—
I know at least what one should be.

I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his red wet throat distil
In blood thro' these two hands. And next,
—Nor much for that am I perplexed—
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
Should die slow of a broken heart
Under his new employers. Last
—Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast
Do I grow old and out of strength.
If I resolved to seek at length
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared!
My brothers live in Austria's pay
—Disowned me long ago, men say;
And all my early mates who used
To praise me so—perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine—
Are turning wise: while some opine
"Freedom grows license," some suspect
"Haste breeds delay," and recollect
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure!
So, with a sullen "All 's for the best,"
The land seems settling to its rest.

He has nothing to look forward to in his own country—father, brothers, sisters, friends, all disown him—through fear. Insincere people,—cowardly people,—the very people who formerly encouraged him in his undertaking, now say that too much freedom is bad; that he was too rash; that they had always warned him not to go too fast. Italy, still enslaved, is becoming shamefully accustomed to slavery; and weak minds exclaim, "It cannot be helped—it is all for the best!" These are the real trials of the reformer—the cowardice of friends, and the indifference and selfishness of the very people for whom he is fighting. He will fight still—for he loves Italy just the same; but he has no wish to see his father's house. He has only three wishes—the first is that he could only once take the Austrian prime minister

by the throat, and squeeze that throat until the blood came squirting through his fingers. That is a wish of hate, but it is patriotic hate; and we may excuse it. The second wish is that the friend of his boyhood, who played traitor, should be punished by remorse only—should die of remorse in the employment of his Austrian friends. And the third wish is this:—

> I think, then, I should wish to stand
> This evening in that dear, lost land,
> Over the sea the thousand miles,
> And know if yet that woman smiles
> With the calm smile;—some little farm
> She lives in there, no doubt: what harm
> If I sat on the door-side bench,
> And while her spindle made a trench
> Fantastically in the dust,
> Inquired of all her fortunes—just
> Her children's ages and their names,
> And what may be the husband's aims
> For each of them. I 'd talk this out,
> And sit there, for an hour about,
> Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
> Mine on her head, and go my way.
>
> So much for idle wishing—how
> It steals the time! To business now.

The reference to the door-side bench is particularly Italian;—in that mild climate, the people live as much out of doors as they can; and many of the peasants' houses have little outside benches, built against the wall, beside the door; and here the women can spin and weave under the sun. What the speaker wishes is that he might be allowed to sit on such a bench outside that woman's house, and talk to her about her children, and their future—while she, perhaps, embarassed by this unexpected visit, would scratch the ground with her spindle,—would draw little aimless figures in the dust, as they talked. And the way—the restraint and

brief way, in which this wish is uttered, betrays the real feeling of the speaker. He does not simply love her—and of course it would be of no use if he did. He reverences her, with that kind of affection which is much higher than mere love. For in her, typified, he beholds, and knows all that he loves in Italy,—in the country for which he would die a thousand deaths if it were necessary. To him she is more than woman: she is Italy.

The next example which I am going to give takes us back again to France, and to the subject of war. It is a little poem which vividly describes—I might say "celebrates" —the pure delight of the soldier in dying for his chief. It is the ecstasy of loyalty combined with the patriotic spirit. Of all persons who ever lived, probably Napoleon best understood how to fill his soldiers' hearts with this spirit. He made them to understand that it was not simply an honour to die for their country, but that it was, or should be a joy to die for him personally. He appeared to them almost as a god;—doubtless the Greek soldiers who followed Alexander to the conquest of India thought of their chief as divine. Perhaps this was the reason why Napoleon dared to tell his armies upon one occasion, that they should consider it their business to get killed. "Oh, you want rest?" he said. "You never shall have any rest—never—never! I shall take you into country after country, until every one of you is killed." Yet they could endure that—perhaps they admired it. Frederick the Great was nearly as brutal in some of his military speeches; it was he who once asked his troops, when they wanted some rest, "You scoundrels! You want to live forever?" Nevertheless those troops adored their rough old king.

Well, here is the little poem that I refer to; it is called "An Incident of the French Camp"—and the incident is true:—

I

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
    A mile or so away
On a little mound, Napoleon
    Stood on our storming-day;

With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
    Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
    Oppressive with its mind.

This represents, as well as verse can do it, the customary attitude of Napoleon standing, as shown in hundreds of pictures, and even in some of the famous statues made of him. In this verse, the word "prone" signifies bending forward, and the word "oppressive" means more than oppressive—heavy. The appearance of the head was peculiar; the lower part of the face being quite delicate, and the upper part presenting a remarkable aspect of weight—as if the brain were too heavy for the little body. And the poet suggests that the attitude of Napoleon standing with his legs apart and his hands behind, looked as if a slight body was trying to balance itself against the weight of the brain . . . But, though the appearance is quite correctly described, the fact is that the brain of Napoleon was found to be rather small—much lighter in fact than the brain of far less remarkable men.

II

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
    "That soar, to earth may fall,
"Let once my army leader Lannes
    "Waver at yonder wall,—"
Out 'twixt the battery smokes there flew
    A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
    Until he reached the mound.

III

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
    And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
    You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lip compressed
    Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
    Was all but shot in two.

IV

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace
"We 've got you Ratisbon!
"The Marshal 's in the market-place,
"And you 'll be there anon
"To see your flag-bird flap his vans
"Where I, to heart's desire,
"Perched him!" The Chief's eye flashed; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

V

The Chief's eye flashed; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes.
"You 're wounded!" "Nay," his soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said:
"I 'm killed, Sire!" And his Chief beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead.

If Ratisbon could not have been taken on that day, Napoleon's plans would very probably have had to be changed. Notice the plural in the word "battery smokes"—the separate smoke puffs of the cannons are thus referred to: "To draw bridle" means to stop the horse, to halt. The word "boy" need not surprise you when you know that a considerable part of Napoleon's army consisted of boys of sixteen to seventeen years old. During the Empire, also, boys were allowed, if strong enough to enlist in the army, at the age of sixteen. But in England a young man of twenty-seven is often called, rather caressingly, a boy. In the fourth stanza remember that the word "van" (a word often used by Milton) means "wing;" and the "flag-bird" is of course the French eagle. To perch the eagle above the stone fortress, means of course to plant the flag as a sign of victory. The boy who brought the news, with his body half cut in two by a cannon shot was the standard bearer. Notice also the splendid force of the last line of the stanza,—the comparison of Napoleon's plans, plans of destruction, to the rising and

soaring of fire. In the fifth stanza you must understand that the word "film" is the nominative in the clause. "Film" means a very thin skin or very thin layer of moisture, or of fluid of any kind. What the poet means to say is that, just as the eye of an eagle might become moist on seeing her young wounded, so Napoleon's eye softened—became gentle, on seeing the condition of the young soldier. Neither Napoleon nor the eagle would shed tears, but the eye might become a little moist, under the influence of emotion—sheathed by a film, as the poet says. Remember that the verb "sheathe" often means only to cover. The boy does not like the mistake which Napoleon makes in imagining him to be wounded only —that hurts his pride; for he wants his chief to know that he is simply shot to pieces, dying, and that he is delighted to die. And he dies smiling.

I may tell you that the incident here described took place in the year 1809, and that the town Ratisbon is in Bavaria.

From Browning one might quote at least a dozen other poems on the subject of patriotism and heroic loyalty. No other English poet, of any other age, has done so much in this direction. And a wonderful fact is that these poems by Browning represent these emotions, not merely as English, but as French, Italian, ancient Greek, modern Arabian. That a man should be able thus to sympathize with the feelings of patriots of other countries and other times is a glorious example; but only a poet of very strong psychological power could do this. I should like to quote all these poems to you; but this is not a lecture on Browning; it is only a lecture about a particular class of poetry in which he was chief easily. I shall therefore attempt only one more quotation,—an Arabian subject. But I will mention to you the beautiful Greek poem of Pheidippides, who went to Sparta to ask for help against the Persians, and who afterwards fought in the great battle of Marathon, running into his native city to announce the victory, and fell dead, as he shouted the joyful news. Again, I should like you should notice

some time the wonderful "Cavalier Tunes" by the same poet —which are little songs, expressing the fierce loyalty of the gentry in the time of Charles the First. Many good poems had been written about the Puritan victories; but Browning was the first to give us really splendid presentations of the noble spirit of the other side—though he himself was no aristocrat in his politics.

Now we may turn to our last example, "Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr." The Metidja is the vast space of country lying south of Algeria, toward the great desert. Abd-el-Kadr, born in 1807, was the chief of the Arab tribes of that region, and of the greater part of Northern Africa. When the French invaded the country, he was able to unite all the tribes against them; and after a long war, in which he showed himself to be a consummate general, the French were obliged to make peace with them. But some years after, the French again invaded the Arab territory in great force; and in spite of the skill of their chief, the Arabs were at last overcome. Abd-el-Kadr himself was taken prisoner; and remained some years in France. Afterwards he was set free, on condition that he promised never to return to Africa. He went to Damascus in Syria, and remained there, faithful to his promise, until the year 1883, when he died, greatly respected and admired even by his enemies. During his captivity in France he wrote a number of interesting books—one of which, edited and translated by General Daumas—indeed published under the name of the general—is very famous and interesting. It is a book about horses, the Arab horses of the desert, and is entitled "Les Chevaux du Sahara."

A little poem describes the feeling and thoughts of a young Arab messenger, riding alone through the desert on a mission to Abd-el-Kadr, whom he reverences and loves. Of course it is a terrible journey—full of danger of every kind—danger from sand-storms, danger from men of prey—the wild robbers who live by plunder and murder—danger also from the foreign enemy, who would scruple at no means

of cutting Abd-el-Kadr's communications. But the youth is proud and glad of his dangerous mission;—it is the greatest possible delight for him to face these terrors, though he must think about them. The poem is written in a very curious measure—a measure that actually imitates the motion of a horse speeding over the hot sand.

I

As I ride, as I ride
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is described, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

II

As I ride, as I ride,
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

III

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

IV

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,

As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride!

V

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
(As I ride, as I ride)
All that 's meant me—satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I 'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride!

Here we have in five stanzas one rhyme-sound repeated no less than sixty-four times—sometimes doubled, sometimes in a dactylic line, sometimes in an anapaestic line. The effect is, and is intended to be, like the motion of a swiftly trotting horse. A curious and effective construction; but the emotional expression is much more effective. Let us paraphrase; and we shall have to paraphrase closely, for this is a very difficult poem.

"As I ride on alone, over the desert sands, with no companion or guide but my own heart—how it is beating, this heart, as if it would burst my side; and so it beats because of the joy and pride that is in me. So does it beat; so does it make the life within me strong and fresh, that it seems as if I had double sight—the sight of the seer of ghosts. For, in imagination only, perhaps, but vividly as if it were real, I see the face of the Chief in whom we trust. I see him always, without trying to see him as I ride.

"As I ride to our Chief and his Arab army, the army of our united tribes, who could blame me,—who dare blame me for the happy pride that I feel? Only—who knows? . . . Yet perhaps I am seen. There may be witnesses—ghostly witnesses, spirits of our desert-ancestors. Perhaps also I am seen, without knowing it, by evil spirits,—by

demons of waste places,—or perhaps by evil men, awaiting to kill me.

"Why indeed should I boast?—Am I boasting too soon? Within me a warning voice seems to say: 'Look at the bones, the white bones about you in the desert. The sands have covered them, and have left them bare again. They were men who rode this way like you, boastingly;—they prayed here, and stayed here—because they were killed. So, very probably you will be killed.' Has that voice lied to me? I don't know—I must not think about it. Let me think only of my duty.

"See my good horse, my brave horse. Never once have I touched him with the spur; but he has never slackened the long fine springing trot of his even for a minute. See his skin; it is all stained and streaked with sweat now; he must be very thirsty; but he does not show it. What a beauty he is! With hoofs like a zebra and thighs like an ostrich! And see how beautifully he steps—every stride of his hind-foot dropping exactly into the hoof-mark left by the fore-foot, as if every stride were competing with every other, but always remaining exactly the same in length measure, just because the horse is doing his very best.

"Well, even if I could see the future, even if I could know what is going to happen to me,—I should not try to find out. Whatever will happen must be the will of Allah—therefore why should I care to know? Before I ask what she intends for me, she might do whatever she pleases. I am contented to wait for the time when the Prophet of God and the Heavenly Bride to whom I shall be united in Paradise will decide that this heart of mine must stop beating. It is beating now too much—the joy is too great: would that it would become a little less excited!"

The reference to the ostrich can only be fully appreciated by those who have seen the bird walk and run. The ostrich stands usually about eight feet high, though there are birds taller than this; and its walk is the most dignified and beautiful of any creature. Of a very

active and graceful man who takes long steps as he walks, the Arabs say, "He walks like an ostrich," but the running of the ostrich is swifter than any horse—for the extraordinary reason that the average length of one stride is no less than twenty-five feet by actual measurement. Thus you will perceive that at every step in running the bird clears a space almost equal to that of this room. The authority for this statement is the article upon the ostrich published in the volume of "The Cambridge Natural History" published a few months ago, "Birds."

"Visioned," in the fifth line of the third stanza, has only the sense of "seen;" and we may render the words "each visioned homicide" by "murdered man seen," that is, the bones of murdered men. Dead bodies in the desert very quickly become dry skeletons, and under the sun they bleach so as to be visible at a great distance; we must suppose that the rider sees many skeletons as he journeys on. The word "pied" in the third line of the fourth stanza signifies "parti-coloured;" (the sweat of the horse, drying, makes whitish stains upon the dark.)

With this remarkable poem I may close the subject of the present lecture. It is a pleasant subject; and we might have many more talks about it. But I want to give you as much variety as I can; and therefore I shall now turn to another topic of equal, though frailer, interest—poems about children. Here I think we shall also have a number of comparatively new experiences.

CHAPTER XI

POEMS ABOUT CHILDREN

Of course it will seem from this title that we are going to deal only with a minor quality of verse. You will think that it requires a very great poet to write a good poem on the subject of patriotism or heroism,—whereas almost any poet can write poetry about children. And, to some extent, such a criticism would be correct. There are tens of thousands of English poems about children—most of which are of very little value. The seeming easiness of the subject tempts even the smallest and weakest poet to write about it. Yet the fact remains unchanged that it requires a very great poet to write a great poem about any subject, and that only great poets have succeeded with the subjects of children. I shall not quote to you many examples of this kind of poetry, because many great examples do not exist. But what I shall offer will represent some of the finest work ever done in English emotional verse.

No man has so well succeeded in the writing of poems about children as Robert Bridges. Robert Bridges is a very great poet—as great as any English poet now living perhaps, with the single exception of Swinburne; but he needed a long time in obtaining recognition. He was a doctor, a country doctor; and a very silent modest man who never figured at all in what is called literary society. Between the intervals of his duty as a physician, he has found time to make three beautiful volumes of poetry which men of letters delight in, but which the public knows scarcely anything about. Such poetry is a little too fine for the common class of reader; and, besides, the method of Dr. Bridges is not at all according to popular

ideas. He is neither a philosopher nor a romantic;—he is quite classic in his notion of correct composition; his subjects are old-fashioned; and he avoids the use of what we call strongly coloured adjectives, as well as the use of melodious effects. When you first try to read Robert Bridges, you feel as if you were under a cold grey sky. But after you read him two or three times you begin to discover that there is a very deep and true beauty in his work—far below the plain surface of it. After really learning to feel the beauty of one of his little poems you never can forget it.

I shall quote at least two pieces from him. The first is simply entitled "On a Dead Child."

Perfect little body, without fault or stain on thee,
With promise of strength and manhood full and fair!
Though cold and stark and bare,
The bloom and the charm of life doth awhile remain on thee.

Thy mother's treasure wert thou;—alas! no longer
To visit her heart with wondrous joy; to be
Thy father's pride;—ah, he
Must gather his faith together, and his strength make stronger.

To me, as I move thee now in the last duty,
Dost thou with a turn or gesture anon respond;
Startling my fancy fond
With a chance attitude of the head, a freak of beauty.

Thy hand clasps, as 'twas wont, my finger, and holds it:
But the grasp is the clasp of Death, heartbreaking and stiff;
Yet feels to my hand as if
'Twas still thy will, thy pleasure and trust that enfolds it.

So I lay thee there, thy sunken eyelids closing,—
Go lie thou there in thy coffin, thy last little bed!—
Propping thy wise, sad head,
Thy firm, pale hands across thy chest disposing.

So quiet! doth the change content thee?—Death, whither hath he taken thee?
To a world, do I think, that rights the disaster of this?

The vision of which I miss,
Who weep for the body, and wish but to warm thee and awaken thee?

Ah! little at best can all our hopes avail us
To lift this sorrow, or cheer us, when in the dark,
Unwilling, alone we embark,
And the things we have seen and have known and have heard of, fail us.

We must understand that the father is washing, with his own hands, the dead body of his little boy; and these are his thoughts which the poet expresses. Very probably this is the record of a personal experience—though I am not sure. The first stanza refers to the beauty of the little unconscious body. A dead child, well-formed, is a beautiful object within a few hours after death and appears only as if asleep. The second stanza suggests how the father suddenly thinks of the mother's future suffering, and then of the necessity of firmness of mind to bear the pain of this loss. But it is very difficult for him to bear it while he is actually washing the little corpse; for, at every moment, the head turns, or the limbs, as he moves them, take perfectly natural positions—so that the boy seems only moving in his sleep; and this obliges the father to remember that he is not asleep. Presently as he begins to wash one of the little hands, its fingers close about his own fingers, just as in life,—just as in the time when he and his little son used to take walks together. At last the washing is done; the little body is placed in the coffin, with a little pillow under the head to prop it up—then, how wise and sad the little face looks! Does the child really know anything now? Where has the life gone? Can the father believe that he has gone to a better world? He cannot believe as other men believe;—therefore he can only weep for the loss of his boy in this world—he cannot help wishing that he could bring him to happy life again,—which is a proof of his doubt. For if we really believe that our dead are happier and in a better world, it would be wrong for us to regret so much. And

the parent reflects on this—he thinks to himself how little any knowledge or any human faith can really help in the moment of such pain. The man must bear his trouble alone—there is no one to comfort him;—there is no one who could possibly comfort him. So he is like one lost at sea, in the dark, in a little boat—without anything to guide, anything to strengthen, anything to assure.

The pathos of this little poem is almost unapproachable—though later on, in another poem, we shall find something even more strangely touching. But death is a subject which is always pathetic;—it will perhaps seem to you strange to find in another child poem the pain of life treated just as tenderly as the pain of death. I do not know whether it is another chapter in the story of the same boy or not; but that makes no difference, because the composition expresses the deeper feeling of every generous parent—the love of the child shadowed by the terrible fear of all the pain that he must bear in order to obtain success in life. The thought is this:—the child in his innocence and sweetness of heart, knowing no evil, wishing to please everyone, is almost like a divine being. There is yet no passion there, no hate, no envy, no deceit. All is frank, true, beautiful, and tender in the little heart. But all this goodness and sweetness must be destroyed. Why? Partly because as the child grows up, other emotions and feelings than those possible to a child must be developed and all of these are not good. Some of them will be very bad. That is one reason. But the chief reason is simply that this is a wicked world and that it does not allow a person to be perfectly good, even if he has the will of the perfect good, and the capacity into the bargain. For example, a perfectly honest man—a man as honest as a child is—would not be able to succeed very well in the world of commerce. A perfectly truthful man—truthful as a child is—would not make a successful diplomat. A perfectly kind man—gentle as the child is—would not be able to defend himself in the least from aggression and would very probably have an extremely unhappy end. Everybody praises the

quality of a good child; yet everybody reproaches a man who happens to retain the quality of his childhood. Strange contradiction! But the contradiction itself is a proof that one cannot succeed in life by being too good. Because we reproach a man for being childish, innocent, and all that—it does not follow that what we blame him for is wrong. We are really blaming him for his good qualities; we are condemning the best moral part of him. We are simply saying to him, "You are not fit to compete with other men because you are not untruthful, cunning and malicious." All these thoughts are suggested by the poem. They are very sad thoughts; but few parents can escape from them. The poem bears the Latin title of "Pater Filio" meaning "The Father to his Son." We need not suppose the words to be really addressed to the child,—for the child could not understand them. They are addressed rather to the spirit of the child: we might imagine the boy asleep, and the father bending above the bed, and thinking these things:—

Sense with keenest edge unusèd,
  Yet unsteel'd by scathing fire;
Lovely feet as yet unbruisèd
  On the ways of dark desire;
Sweetest hope that lookest smiling
O'er the wilderness defiling!

Why such beauty, to be blighted
  By the swarm of foul destruction?
Why such innocence delighted,
  When sin stalks to thy seduction?
All the litanies e'er chaunted
Shall not keep thy faith undaunted.

I have pray'd the sainted Morning
  To unclasp her hands to hold thee;
From resignful Eve's adorning
  Stol'n a robe of peace to enfold thee;
With all charms of man's contriving
Arm'd thee for thy lonely striving.

Me too once unthinking Nature,
—Whence Love's timeless mockery took me,—
Fashion'd so divine a creature,
Yea, and like a beast forsook me.
I forgave, but tell the measure
Of her crime in thee, my treasure.

The first stanza and the second refer to the possible future:—"O ye fresh and exquisitely delicate little senses, not yet hardened by the terrible pain of the fire of life;—O pretty little feet that have not yet felt the roughness, and the torture of walking upon the path of passions; O gentle and hopeful little soul, looking before you without any fear over the horrible and foul wilderness of human struggle!

"Why should such beauty as yours ever have been made at all since it must be sooner or later destroyed by the forces of sickness and sorrow? Why should such happy innocence as yours exist at all, since the power of sin and shame are waiting to destroy you if they can? Why should you now have such trust, such faith,—believing everybody, believing that all is good? No matter how much you may pray in the years to come, no prayer can prevent you at last from doubting and fearing—doubting God, fearing evil.

"I have prayed to Her, the divine Mother, whom they call the Star of the Morning, to unfold her compassionate hand for a little time, only to embrace you, and protect you! —I have put about you the same robe of innocence which Eve long ago laid aside, in order that you may have peace and no fear!—and with all the knowledge that civilization has given me—knowledge of the world, magic of science, wizardry of experience, I have tried to prepare you for the terrible battle into which you must some day enter, without help;—for I cannot always be with you.

"Once very long ago, blind Nature, indifferent Nature, made me just as divine a creature as you now are. By Love's accident I was taken out of Nature's being, and shaped into just such a little boy—all by the chance of Love who is the eternal mocker, the Eternal Illusion. Yes, Nature

once made me as fair and as innocent as you are, and then she forsook me, abandoned me as an animal abandons its young when the time of suckling is past. I could forgive Nature—but how great her cruelty was to me, I now can judge by looking at you, my treasure—by loving you, and fearing for you."

Now we shall take one more poem from the same writer. The first of our quotations was about the feelings of the father while preparing the body of his own child for the grave;—our second quotation refers to parental fear and love, bestirred by thoughts regarding the future of a son;—now our third example shall be a poem describing the feelings of a man on seeing his own picture when a little boy. The last stanza of the last poem naturally introduces this subject. It is only when looking at one's own child that one can really understand how beautiful a thing, how divine a thing childhood is. And having once really understood this fact, it becomes a very strange experience, in adult life, to gaze upon the picture of oneself when a child. One can scarcely believe one's eyes. "Was this really I?" is the first question that comes to the mind. The poem describing these feelings has no title: it is simply No. 39 of the collection of sonnets entitled "The Growth of Love:"—

A man that sees by chance his picture, made
As once a child he was, handling some toy,
Will gaze to find his spirit within the boy,
Yet hath no secret with the soul pourtray'd:
He cannot think the simple thought which play'd
Upon those features then so frank and coy;
'Tis his, yet oh! not his: and o'er the joy
His fatherly pity bends in tears dismay'd.

Proud of his prime maybe he stand at best,
And lightly wear his strength, or aim it high,
In knowledge, skill and courage self-possest:—
Yet in the pictured face a charm doth lie,
The one thing lost more worth than all the rest,
Which seeing, he fears to say *This child was I.*

A man who happens to see a picture of himself as a child—taken while he was playing with his toys—riding a little horse of wood, for example,—looks into the child-face in the picture, in order to try to find something of his old character there. But no matter how long he looks at that picture, he cannot quite discover himself in it. There is a little soul there—shy, gentle, full of joy,—the soul of a boy; but the soul of the man now has no secret relation with the soul of the boy. It was his own soul; but he cannot now understand it in the least. He cannot think in the same way, he cannot feel in the same way as the little boy in that picture thought and felt. The soul of the man has grown away from the soul of the boy so far that comprehension is impossible. The picture is the picture of himself; but it is in another way not the picture of himself—and bending above it, to look at the happy childish face, he weeps —out of pity for himself.

Yet why should he pity himself?—Is he not wiser and stronger and nobler and altogether superior to the boy? Is he not now in the very prime of his life, in the very best period of his existence? Perhaps he is so strong that he fears nothing in this world, and needs nothing;—perhaps again he is ambitious, and justly proud of his strength in overcoming obstacles—proud of his knowledge, proud of his experience, proud of his courage, always sure of victory. Nevertheless there is something in the face of that child that is higher and nobler and better and rarer than all his strength and all his knowledge. There is something in the face of the child that is worth more than all that he can ever hope to be. But it is gone—lost for ever. And as he looks at the picture, he becomes at last afraid and ashamed to say, "This was myself." Because there is a something divine and supremely pure in childhood—something that, when childhood is past, never can come back again.

There is no doubt that if a man could actually meet and talk to—not the picture of himself as a boy, but to his own very self as a boy—the two would not be able to understand

each other at all. They might love each other, like an elder brother and a younger brother, or like father and son, but they could not possibly comprehend each other's thoughts. Children themselves know that big people cannot understand them. There are two little boys and a little girl playing in the street—sitting down there in the sun and playing with little stones or little sticks. Just go and stand behind them and watch them and try to understand how they feel. You cannot understand. And if you ask them, they will never tell you—never in this world. Why will they not tell you? Because they know that you cannot understand if they did tell. Now I wonder very much why some great poet or story-teller does not try to give us a story about a man meeting with a little boy that was once himself, and trying to understand the mystery of childhood. There is a splendid literary subject. But it requires a psychologist to treat it really well.

Now I shall take an example of child poetry from another poet—a very original and curious poet, Coventry Patmore. Patmore was altogether an extraordinary person. For the subject of his first book of importance he took the story of his own married life. He related in verse how he first met, first liked, and first loved the girl whom he afterwards married; and all the details of the wooing, the engagement and the wedding he made poems about. Only a very clever man and a very delicately minded man could do such a thing without offending good taste. But Patmore could do it: he did it so charmingly that his book quickly became famous. This was the book called "The Angel in the House." Afterwards he wrote beautiful poems upon other subjects—several of which doubtless refer to his own life. Among these there is one poem about a child—probably, or possibly, his own child, which is perhaps the most touching thing of the kind ever written. It is entitled "The Toys"—and it needs no comment at all:—

My little Son, who look'd from thoughtful eyes
And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,
Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,

I struck him, and dismiss'd
With hard words and unkiss'd,
His Mother, who was patient, being dead.
Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,
I visited his bed,
But found him slumbering deep,
With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet
From his late sobbing wet.
And I, with moan,
Kissing away his tears, left others of my own;
For, on a table drawn beside his head,
He had put, within his reach,
A box of counters and a red-vein'd stone,
A piece of glass abraded by the beach
And six or seven shells,
A bottle with bluebells
And two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art,
To comfort his sad heart.
So when that night I pray'd
To God, I wept, and said:
Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And Thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood,
Thy great commanded good,
Then, fatherly not less
Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,
Thou'lt grieve Thy wrath, and say,
'I will be sorry for their childishness.'

The father is evidently at the sea-side with his little boy. We may suppose the child to be from five to seven years old—probably between six and seven. Something which he has been told not to do, the little boy does several times; and at last the father, losing patience, slaps him, and sends him away to bed without kissing him. As it is the English custom to kiss a child before putting him to bed, a little boy becomes very unhappy if his father refuses this good-night caress. After the boy is gone, the father feels sorry

for having slapped him—remembers how patient the dead mother used to be: she never would have slapt him. So, feeling suddenly remorseful, the father walks very softly into the child's room, to comfort him. But the little boy is asleep. His face is still wet with tears; but as the father bends over him, he sees something that makes his own tears flow. For, the little child, being left all alone, tried to amuse himself with his playthings, and these he had put on a little table, and then pulled the little table close to the bed so that while lying in the bed he might be able to play with them. And what funny little playthings they were—wonderful only to a child's mind. A little stone, picked up on the sea-shore, because it had a curious colour; a bit of glass that had been rolled about by the waves so long that the broken edges had become quite smooth; a tiny glass bottle with some wild flowers in it; some counters; and to childish imagination the most wonderful of all, two beautiful French coins worth about ten *rin* probably! From this point the merely touching part of the poem suddenly deepens into religious seriousness. The father, touched by the child's pleasure in small things, suddenly hopes that God will afterwards forgive him, just as he is now willing to forgive the child—and for the same reason. After all, what right had he to punish the little boy so harshly? "If God were to judge me, as severely as I judged this child,—would he not find me incomparably more to blame? But, after all, in the sight of the Supreme, the wisest man may be only like a little boy, playing with shells and wild flowers; and perhaps all men will be forgiven for their faults merely because they are only like little foolish children under the eyes of the Infinite Wisdom."

The verse in which this poem is written appears to be very irregular. This measure is called catalectic, from a Greek word καταληκτικός, "katalektikos," signifying "pause;" in other words we might say that this sort of irregular poetry is called "pause-poetry." The measure allows extraordinary freedom to the poet. He can use the pause

almost wherever he pleases and he can use or not use rhyme. Nevertheless, easy as this sort of verse appears, it is really very difficult to write well. You may also notice that the lines can be varied in length from three to five feet. A great part of Patmore's work is composed in this form.

Hitherto our examples have chiefly been of the melancholy sort. At this point I may appropriately quote a little sonnet by Longfellow, which may be considered as the best possible consolation for those who fear their children's future and are over-anxious about them:—

A SHADOW

I said unto myself, if I were dead,
What would befall these children? What would be
Their fate, who now are looking up to me
For help and furtherance? Their lives, I said,
Would be a volume wherein I have read
But the first chapters, and no longer see
To read the rest of their dear history,
So full of beauty and so full of dread.
Be comforted; the world is very old,
And generations pass, as they have passed,
A troop of shadows moving with the sun;
Thousands of times has the old tale been told;
The world belongs to those who come the last,
They will find hope and strength as we have done.

This charming sonnet needs no paraphrasing nor explanation; it is very simple, but it is very appropriate and consolatory. There is no other answer indeed to the fear that all parents must feel; yet perhaps this is answer enough. For we must not attempt to find fault with the eternal order of the universe.

I am now going to quote a few poems dealing with child-psychology—I mean with the manner in which a child thinks and feels. So far I have been giving poems only relating to the way in which parents feel. I acknowledge

that they are the most beautiful poems upon the subject. But that is for an obvious reason. Nothing is more difficult for a grown-up person than to be able to think and to feel like a child—even to understand the mind of a child. And therefore many scientific books have been written of late years in England, in France, in Italy, in Germany and in America to teach people how to study and how to try to understand the minds of children. It is not nearly so easy a matter as you might think and it is a very strange thing that there are very few really good books written for children,—I mean books that contain thinking like the thinking of children. I even doubt whether there are half a dozen such books in the whole of English literature. The best books of the kind produced during the last century is, strangely enough, the production of a professor of mathematics. I do not think that his mathematics helped him in this respect; and I am not at all sure whether scientific psychology can help any man to really sympathize with a child's thinking. In order to write as a child feels one must either be born with an astonishing faculty of intuition, as that professor of mathematics certainly was; or else one must have an extraordinary memory enabling him to recollect how he felt as a child. Poets who write about child-thoughts usually seem to depend upon memory, and memory certainly created the next poem that I am going to quote a part of. It is a translation from the Danish; I shall give you only the best verses—omitting several which treat of religious thoughts and having nothing to do with the real merit of the composition. I think you will find it very true, and also simply beautiful.

CHILDHOOD

There was a time when I was very small
When my whole frame was but an ell in height,
Sweetly as I recall it, tears do fall,
And therefore I recall it with delight.

I swerved in my tender mother's arms,
And rode a horse-back on my father's knee;

Alike were sorrows, passions and alarms,
And gold and grief, and love unknown to me.

Then seemed to me this world far less in size,
Likewise it seemed to me less wicked far;
Like points in heaven, I saw the stars arise,
And longed for wings that I might catch a star.

I saw the moon behind the island fade,
And thought, "O were I on that island there,
I could find out of what the moon is made,
Find out how large it is, how round, how fair."

With childish reverence my young lips did say
The prayer my pious mother had taught me,
"O gentle God! O let me strive . . . . . .
. . . . . and follow thee!"

So prayed I for my mother and father
And for my sister and for all the town,
The king I know not and the beggar-brother,
Who, bent with age, went sighing up and down.

They perished, the blithe days of boyhood perished
And all . . . . , all the peace I knew.
Now have I but their memory fondly cherished,
God! May I never, never lose that too!

The simplicity of this does not prevent it from being beautiful: it gives us not a few of the happy feelings and thoughts of a child in the truest possible way. What child does not at times wish that he could take the stars into his hands,—or go to the exact place where the moon sinks down, and take hold of it and feel what it is like,—or go to the place where a rainbow seems to be touching the ground. Again, what child does not at some time believe that all the world is good—that all men are big brothers, and all women big sisters? Now if we could really all of us continue to think in the same way about the world, what a very much better world it would be! But I shall take now an equally simple subject treated with an art that is not at all simple.

The poet was a brother of the poet Tennyson; and the subject is a little girl playing with a terrestrial globe. She is much too young to understand geography; but she pretends that she does in order to please her father and mother, and pleases them more by this little hypocrisy than she could have done by any display of precocious knowledge. One of the prettiest things to study in the conduct of a child is the manifestation of an intuitive desire to please. For the child understands us very much better than we understand the child—it understands very quickly what you wish it to do or to say or to tell; and it will immediately try to do or to say or pretend to think or pretend to feel what is desired. You may say that this is acting and not sincere. Quite true. A child is a very great actor. But as for the insincerity—what a pretty insincerity it is, how generous, and how unselfish!

LETTY'S GLOBE

When Letty had scarce pass'd her third glad year,
And her young, artless words began to flow,
One day we gave the child a color'd sphere
Of the wide earth, that she might mark and know,
By tint and outline, all its sea and land.
She patted all the world; old empires peep'd
Between her baby fingers; her soft hand
Was welcome at all frontiers. How she leap'd,
And laugh'd and prattled in her world-wide bliss;
But when we turn'd her sweet unlearned eye
On our own isle, she rais'd a joyous cry,
"Oh! yes, I see it, Letty's home is there!"
And, while she hid all England with a kiss,
Bright over Europe fell her golden hair!

This needs no paraphrase—though it is a finely complicated piece of work, a very fine sonnet. But it has that clearness which attaches to the great work of correct poets. Notice how natural it is. Of course you know that Western children will almost instinctively kiss anything which they are fond of—birds, cats, little dogs, even inanimate objects, such

as a favourite toy or a pretty picture. In Sully's beautiful book of child life, there is another ugly story about a little boy who wanted to kiss a big watch-dog of which he was very fond; but unfortunately the dog was eating at the time, and becoming angry bit a piece out of the child's cheek. Nevertheless the little fellow would not let the dog be killed and showed no resentment. The impulse of the little girl to kiss the map of England on the globe is perfectly natural and we may suppose that the whole incident is taken from life. Although the poem is of an elevating kind, there is just a touch of delicate humour all through it, most marked, perhaps, in the playful use of the compound adjective "world-wide" in the ninth line.

In a lecture upon Wordsworth given last year, I quoted Wordsworth's best poems upon children—"Anecdote for Fathers," and "We are Seven." It will not be necessary to treat them again. Also I quoted for you last year, a very pretty poem by Barnes—who rarely writes in the same pure English—concerning a mother's dream about her dead boy. These I only mention now, so that you may not forget where to find them if you wish. In the category of poems relating to child-characters I would also place that famous poem by Southey, "The Battle of Blenheim," which I suppose you have all read, so that we need not quote it here. Let me observe, however, that the object of this poem is to show how the simple moral sense of the child can put problem to an old man which all his experience will not enable him to answer. The boy, playing with the skull, and the little sister looking at it, really show themselves wiser beings than the grandfather who knows all about the battle in which the owner of the skull lost his life. He can only say, "'Twas a famous victory"—and even this he says only because he heard other people say it. But when the little girl exclaimed, "Why, 'twas a very wicked thing!" the old man is nonplussed. He thinks that she ought not to say that; but he fails to prove to her that war can be anything else than wicked.

A little while ago I spoke to you about the use of memory in compositions of this class; and it is rather strange to observe how the most serious of men occasionally turn back to the recollection of their childhood, and find in such recollection a source of pleasure or a religious inspiration. Take, for example, the case of Newman, the Oxford scholar who, changing his religion, became a Roman Catholic and afterwards a cardinal. He was a very cold and serious person, whom many persons thought incapable of affection or of any warm feeling. He was of a logical temperament; and the only remarkable book that he ever wrote was a book of controversy in which he showed a great deal of cleverness in a bad cause. Although a great master of precise English, and a writer occasionally of fiction, there is not a particle of feeling in his work. But this cold, and almost unpleasant person could think and write beautifully in verse when he remembered his childhood. He did very little composition of this kind; but what he did is very good. Listen to this little poem entitled "The Trance of Time:"—

In childhood, when with eager eyes
  The season-measured years I view'd,
    All, garb'd in fairy guise,
      Pledged constancy of good.

Spring sang of heaven; the summer flowers
  Bade me gaze on, and did not fade;
    Even suns o'er autumn's bowers
      Heard my strong wish, and stay'd.

They came and went, the short-lived four;
  Yet, as their varying dance they wove,
    To my young heart each bore
      Its own sure claim of love.

Far different now;—the whirling year
  Vainly my dizzy eyes pursue;
    And its fair tints appear
      All blent in one dusk hue.

Then what this world to thee, my heart?
Its gifts nor feed thee nor can bless.
Thou hast no owner's part
In all its fleetingness.

The memory of the happiness of childhood and the painful contrast between that past of love and this painful present naturally leads to a reflection upon the impermanency of all earthly things. The thought may be religious; but in this poem no definite allusion to religion exists—which leaves it all the more perfect, because we are able to share in both emotions, no matter what our opinions may be.

This needs paraphrasing, for it is a very deeply suggestive thing. Perhaps you think it is easy verse. But I hope that you will not think so;—nothing could be harder to write, and every word and every syllable is the best possible that could be used in such a composition.

"When I was a child, I used to watch for the coming of the season very eagerly. The years seemed much longer than they now do; and as I measured them by the seasons, the seasons also seemed to me very, very long. But they also seemed very, very beautiful—beautiful as fairies; and all of them filled me with hope, and with the idea that I would always be happy.

"The spring-time always made me think about Heaven: and the singing of the birds appeared to me almost divine. In the summer-time the flowers seemed to ask me to look at them; seemed to say, 'Do not be afraid to look at us, and to find pleasure in us: we are not going to die very soon.' And they did not die very soon. No: when I was a boy the flowers lived much longer than they do now. So the summer was beautiful for me and very long; and the autumn was also long and beautiful. When the winter was said to be approaching, I used to wish that the autumn would last longer; and the great autumn sun seemed to know my wish, and granted it and made the seasons longer just to please me.

"So the four seasons that now seem so short, then came slowly and went slowly. The ancient poets represented them

as a bevy of beautiful nymphs dancing—my seasons also seemed to circle in one ever happy dance. But not one passed by me without bringing some gift of love, something to make me happy.

"How different the world now seems! how fast the years go!—so fast that it makes me dizzy nearly to watch them go. And the seasons are not now as they used to be, full of azure light and golden sun;—they are all, all of them, dark, dark—one dull grey colour. My soul is becoming grey: I can no longer see and feel Nature's beauty.

"Then why should I care about the world? Does not the memory of my happy childhood teach me that everything is impermanent, even the power to be happy? What has the world to give me now that could make me happy? Nothing. It does not belong to me. It is an illusion, a phantom that passes away."

There was a man who died only a few years ago who was much happier than Newman in one regard,—namely, that he remained until the moment of his death as fresh-hearted and as happy as a child. I mean Robert Louis Stevenson, perhaps the best romance writer of the century—certainly the best writer of fiction during the Victorian era. Stevenson was asked to write books for children, because he remained always such a happy boy that he seemed to understand children better than any body else. And he wrote a book of poems for children,—just to please the publishers. These poems are almost all little memories of his own childhood, and from a psychological point of view they are so interesting that great men of science have written learnedly about them. But I think that the publishers made a mistake. They ought not to have asked Stevenson to write poetry, but only to write prose. If he had written a little book of prose stories or fancies for children, he would have done something very beautiful, but he was not a poet; he did not have the inborn gift of verse, he could not have written such a thing as Newman wrote under any circumstances. So I can only tell you in regard to his "Child's Garden of Verses," that

the garden is pretty but not well cultivated. I mean that there are only two or three little bits in the book which I can quote to you as good poetry, and even these are more of interest psychologically than poetically. I shall only quote two. But there can be no mistake about the truth of the feeling they express. Children like them; and children are the best critics in regard to the truth of such things. I think that everyone of you can remember, when a child, having played with his bed covering. In this country we may call them *futon* and in England we call them quilts and blankets and sheets and counterpanes; but that makes no difference at all so far as the experience is concerned. I think that you have all of you at some time fancied that the folds of your bed covering looked like valleys and mountains—perhaps you have imagined forests on the mountains and rivers in the valleys. Stevenson wrote one little bit called "The Land of Counterpane" which excellently expresses the feelings of the child while imagining such things.

When I was sick and lay a-bed,
I had two pillows at my head,
And all my toys beside me lay
To keep me happy all the day

And sometimes for an hour or so
I watched my leaden soldiers go,
With different uniforms and drills,
Among the bed-clothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets
All up and down among the sheets;
Or brought my trees and houses out,
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still
That sits upon the pillow-hill,
And sees before him, dale and plain,
The pleasant land of counterpane.

Ask any child, any little Tokyo boy or girl what this means and I think that little boy or girl will reply that he or she has thought and played in the same way among the bed-clothes. Here is another little bit of excellent psychology entitled, "My Kingdom:"—

Down by a shining water well
I found a very little dell,
No higher than my head.
The heather and the gorse about
In summer bloom were coming out,
Some yellow and some red.

I called the little pool a sea;
The little hills were big to me;
For I am very small.
I made a boat, I made a town,
I searched the caverns up and down,
And named them one and all.

And all about was mine, I said,
The little sparrows overhead,
The little minnows too.
This was the world and I was king;
For me the bees came by to sing,
For me the swallows flew.

I played, there were no deeper seas,
Nor any wider plains than these,
Nor other kings than me.
At last I heard my mother call
Out from the house at evenfall,
To call me home to tea.

And I must rise and leave my dell,
And leave my dimpled water well,
And leave my heather blooms.
Alas! and as my home I neared,
How very big my nurse appeared,
How great and cool the rooms!

Because, after this kind of playing, in which the child makes a little world for himself, imagines a puddle of water

to be a sea and the little bit of clay to be like Mt. Fuji, if you suddenly break his little dream and recall him to the realities of life, his little imagination is almost frightened by the change. A moment ago he fancied himself bigger than a mountain; but now, the nurse-girl comes for him—and how enormous she looks, and how enormously big and cold and dismal even the house looks when he gets home. If you think this is not true, just ask some little brother or sister or nephew about it.

So far as suggestive poetry is concerned, I am not sure whether we have in English anything better on the subject of children than certain pieces by William Blake. But last year I gave a lecture upon this great mystic poet;—therefore I do not think it advisable to quote from him now. I shall only remark that the most original of his poems upon children, and the most touching, are to be found in the two divisions of his poetry entitled "Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience." Perhaps I may also call your attention to the fact that the poem about "The Little Girl Lost" —telling us how a lion took care of her, and afterwards took care of her parents—has also been an inspiration to foreign poets. There is a curious medieval superstition behind the poem. Formerly it was believed that a lion, a tiger, or any wild beast would not injure a child or a virgin. If there had been lions and tigers in Europe such a superstition could scarcely have existed. What is very curious is that the belief was directly opposed to Christian hagiography, for there are, on the rolls of cannonized saints, many names of virgins said to have been devoured by lions and other wild beasts, in the amphitheatre at Rome. However, the fancy was a romantic one; and poets will continue, perhaps, to find inspiration in it for many years to come. Probably Victor Hugo took his idea from Blake, modifying it considerably, when he wrote the story about a lion who spared the life of a little child because a baby brother told him to give up his prey. The medieval idea related only to a virgin, a girl; Victor Hugo extends it to the child consider-

ed in the abstract as a holy being.

There is one more division of poetry related to children which ought at least to be mentioned—I mean that which is usually called "society verse," a term borrowed bodily from the French "vers de société." The rule about this kind of verse is that it should represent the fashionable way, the aristocratic way, of speaking about life and about all serious matters. You must talk about serious things in a non-serious way; you must not directly express strong emotion, but you may suggest it; and the best way to suggest it is by so completely repressing it that the repression itself becomes suggested. I might say that such poetry is written upon the same principle that causes a brave man or woman to smile when speaking of some great misfortune—a death, ruin of property, loss of high position, etc. In other words, this is very genteel poetry—too genteel for common people to care about. But it is often beautiful. The best of the later poets who adopted this kind of verse was Frederick Locker, who died only a few years ago. His cleverest things are about grown-up children, girls of fourteen or fifteen; but he has some pretty things on the subject of real children; and I shall quote part of one, just to show you what this kind of verse means:

Baby mine, with the grave, grave face,
  Where did you get that royal calm,
Too staid for joy, too still for grace?
  I bend as I kiss your pink, soft palm;
Are you the first of a nobler race,
                Baby mine?

You come from the region of *long ago*,
  And gazing awhile where the seraphs dwell
Has given your face a glory and glow—
  Of that brighter land have you aught to tell?
I seem to have known it—I more would know,
                Baby mine.

Your calm, blue eyes have a far-off reach,
  Look at me now with those wondrous eyes,
Why are we doom'd to the gift of speech

While you are silent, and sweet, and wise?
You have much to learn—you have more to teach,
Baby mine.

One of the most extraordinary things about the face of a beautiful child is the strange expression of seriousness which it has—a great appearance of knowing and understanding what it cannot possibly know or understand. Even when asleep the face of a child has this extraordinary expression. Artists noticed this fact long ago, and gave to the faces of their gods the calm and placid smile of the child. Among Christian artists the great Italian sculptor Michael-angelo made the most remarkable study of childish calm in two famous pictures of angels, which he painted for the interior of a church. The faces of these angels and the bodies of them are childish; but you can see in the eyes of those children, all the wisdom of eternity, all the knowledge that ever was or is or ever could be. And the way in which the artist obtained such effect consisted merely in idealizing a little—only a little—the real expression of a beautiful child's face. Poets and philosophers, too, long ago imagined that the appearance of supreme calm and supreme knowledge in the face of a little child might signify that the soul of the child has not yet forgotten the wisdom of former lives in heaven or upon earth. Of course the baby could not talk: if he could talk, it might be able to tell us everything that we wish to know;—therefore the gods do not allow it to talk until it has quite forgotten all about its former states of existence. I am just telling you in a very vague way only, some of the old theories, which are too beautiful in themselves to be laughed at, even though we know very well why the child looks wise without being the least bit wise. Wordsworth put one of these old theories into new form when he wrote his "Intimations of Immortality;" but hundreds of poets have done the same thing. Since Wordsworth, Victor Hugo repeated the fancy at least a hundred times, and Frederick Locker utters the same thought in the little poem I have just read to you. But he has done

it in so original a way that no one can say that he imitated Wordsworth. Notice the use of one syllable words to express ideas. In the first stanza of the poem there are only three words of more than one syllable, "royal," "nobler" and "baby." But no other adjectives could express the repose of a child's face better than the monosyllables, "staid," "grave" and "still." But easy as the poem looks we had better paraphrase it for the sake of the inner meaning which is not simple at all:—

"Child, with that strangely serious face, how did you learn to look so calm, like a king, like an emperor? That calm of yours does not come from joy: it is too solemn for joy. Nor is it the calm of mere beauty and goodness: it is too motionless, too impassive for that. Perhaps it is that calm which is divine. Divine or not, I bow down before you, and kiss your little pink palm, and wonder whether you are really human,—whether you may not be the first of a new race of beings, higher than man, a race of creatures divine, demigods.

"Wherever you come from, you certainly have come to us out of the past—out of the very far past—out of all eternity. Very possibly you have been in heaven, where the seraphs, the angels of love are said to be; and perhaps it is the light of heaven that even now makes your face seem so luminous and beautiful. But do you remember anything about heaven? When I look at you I can almost feel as if I had once been in heaven, and had forgotten it. I wish that you could tell me something more about it.

"You do not appear to be thinking of what you look at—you see; but your thoughts are not with your eyes. Your eyes appear to see beyond this world, beyond space and time. Will you not look at me for just one little moment with those wonderful eyes? Why should we men and women be obliged to know how to talk, and be obliged to talk to each other in this wicked world? For, much evil is made by speaking. But you cannot speak, do not speak, you do no wrong. You are silent; you are all gentle; and

you are certainly wise—for half of our study in this world is only to learn what it is that we ought not to say. Of course, as you are only a baby, you will have to learn a great many things. But there are a great many things which the sight of you can teach to any man who can understand."

I should close this lecture with the last quotation, were it not that I have been asked by some of you to quote some French poems upon children by Victor Hugo. Before attempting this, however, I want to tell you frankly that I do not think that Victor Hugo was a great poet on this particular subject of children. Victor Hugo was a supremely great poet on the subject of love; he was a great poet on the subject of humanity, liberty, fraternity; he was a great poet when he attacked Napoleon the Third, and he was a great poet when he attacked the Jesuits. But he was not a great poet, in my opinion, on the subject of children. His character was not of that kind which really enables a man to understand the heart of a child. And, therefore, although he has written a large number of poems about children, there is very little in these poems except beautifully sounding words and rather commonplace thoughts. As to thinking about children, Victor Hugo seldom equals Blake, never equals Wordsworth. However, let us see how he treats the very same subjects on which Locker made the poem we have just paraphrased: —

LES ENFANTS PAUVRES

Prenez garde à ce petit être;
Il est bien grand, il contient Dieu.
Les enfants sont, avant de naître,
Des lumières dans le ciel bleu.

Dieu nous les offre en sa largesse;
Ils viennent; Dieu nous en fait don.
Dans leur rire il met sa sagasse
Et dans leur baiser son pardon.

Leur douce clarté nous effleure.
Hélas, le bonheur est leur droit.

S'ils ont faim, le paradis pleure.
Et le ciel tremble, s'ils ont froid.

La misère de l'innocence
Accuse l'homme vicieux.
L'homme tient l'ange en sa puissance.
Oh! quel tonnerre au fond des cieux,

Quand Dieu, cherchant ces êtres frêles
Que dans l'ombre où nous sommeillons
Il nous envoie avec des ailes,
Les retrouve avec de haillons!

"Care well for this little creature;—he is really great—very great; for he contains God. Children before being born into this world, are lights in the blue heaven.

"God offers them to us out of his bounty;—they come; God makes us the gift of them. Into their laughter he puts his wisdom, and into their kiss he puts his pardon.

"Their sweet light faintly touches us. Alas! happiness is their right. If they be hungry, paradise weeps; and if they be cold, heaven trembles.

"The misery of innocence itself accuses the vicious man. (That is to say that the unhappiness of an innocent child proves the parents to be vicious). Man holds for a moment an angel in his power.

"O what thunders will be heard from the depth of the heavens when God seeking for those frail beings which he sends to us with wings—sends to us into that gloom in which we sleep—finds them again with only rags to clothe them."

Now I do not say that this is not beautiful; it is really about the best poem on children in the whole volume entitled "L'Art d'être Grand-Père" (the art of being a grandfather). But does it contain a single new thought, or a single deep thought? I do not think so—unless we grant that the line in reference to the child being an angel temporarily put into the power of man, be a new thought. It is rather a playing upon a very old fancy; and the rest of the poem certainly contains nothing that we have not heard before, except its musical sound and bright colour. Now half of

Victor Hugo at least, is mere sound and colour: he is never a great thinker—and it requires a great thinker to do justice to the subject of children—although he is often a great painter and a grand poet in the expression of strong emotion. He has written hundreds of poems about children—chiefly about his own children,—and there is nothing great in them, except the mere mastery of verse. Translated (and remember that translation is the best test of the value of poetry), they prove to be little more than well expressed commonplaces. I may say that the only way to get any value out of Victor Hugo's poems on children is to pick out a few beautiful lines here and there of the mass of platitude which he has written about them. Nobody admires Hugo at his best more sincerely than I do; and therefore I find it even painful to tell you that he is never at his best on the subject of children. We can get beautiful lines, beautiful single stanzas, out of these poems, but no great composition. As for stanzas, here are three which I think beautiful, taken from a composition* in the volume entitled "The Leaves of Autumn." †

Car vos beaux yeux sont pleins de douceurs infinies,
Car vos petites mains, joyeuses et bénies,
N'ont point mal fait encor;
Jamais vos jeunes pas n'ont touché notre fange,
Tête sacrée! enfant aux cheveux blonds! bel ange
A l'aurèole d'or!

Vous êtes parmi nous la colombe de l'arche.
Vos pieds tendres et purs n'ont point l'âge où l'on marche,
Vos ailes sont d'azur.
Sans le comprendre encor vous regardez le monde.
Double virginité! corps où rien n'est immonde,
Ame où rien n'est impur!

Il est si beau, l'enfant, avec son doux sourire,
Sa douce bonne foi, sa voix qui veut tout dire,
Ses pleurs vite apaisés,

* *Lorsque l'enfant paraît.* † *Les Feuilles d'Automne.*

Laissant errer sa vue étonnée et ravie,
Offrant de toutes parts sa jeune âme à la vie
Et sa bouche aux baisers!

"For your beautiful eyes are full of infinite sweetness; for your little hands, happy and blessed little hands have never yet done wrong;—never have your young steps touched the foul slime of this world of ours,—O holy head! O blond haired child! fair angel with your aureole of gold!

"Among us you are like the Dove of the Ark. Your pure and tender feet are not yet old enough to walk; your wings are azure. You look at the world without yet being able to understand it. O double virginity!—body in which there is nothing unclean, soul in which there is nothing impure!

"He is so beautiful, the child, with his sweet smile,—with his sweet trust,—with that little voice of his, desirous of telling everything,—with his tears so quickly dried;—everywhere turning his wondering gaze in astonishment and delight; everywhere offering his young soul to life, and his mouth to kisses!"

I think these verses have a certain beauty outside of the mere beauty of sound and form, because they express the emotion of a man looking upon the innocence and charm of his own children. There is here a certain sincerity—not always to be found in Victor Hugo. Then the idea about the "double virginity" of the child is certainly fine,—fine at least if we do not attach any commonplace religious meaning to the world "virginity." If virginity in itself were a holy condition of being, we should expect that a person who always remains a virgin would be morally better than other people. But this is not the case; on the contrary, the men and the women who never marry are apt to become morally deficient, and to develop those peculiarly irritating faults which are generally classed under the name of "old-maidishness." An old maid is not apt to be an agreeable person; and a man who has never had any sexual life is not likely to be much of a man in other respects. There is nothing

whatever intrinsically holy about virginity in the religious sense—on the contrary it means both moral and physical deficiency. But the poet means virginity in another sense, —that absolute purity both of blood and of mind which we may find in a healthy good child. To that extent his thought is delicate and new. But when we consider the rest of what he says we find that there is nothing at all deep in it. It is true; but its truth adds nothing to our stock of knowledge, nor does it move our emotion in any new way.

One can look through fifty volumes of English poetry without finding five poems of real value upon the subject of children; but you can find four poems. You can look through a hundred volumes of French poems without finding even one really great poem about children. Why is this? I am not very sure of being able to answer correctly; but I do not think that the Latin races have the same feelings in regard to children as the Northern races;—I do not think that they have the same depth of domestic affection; I do not think that they have the same sense of the mystery of the universe; they are less thoughtful in the deeper sense of thinking. To understand an artistic truth I should question an Italian or a Frenchman, never an Englishman. To obtain the best possible impression of beauty, I should consult French masters or Italian masters, never English masters. But when we leave the mere world of sensation, and seek for the great depths of emotion—that emotion which is the least selfish and most like to religious feeling, then I should never seek French or Italian inspiration. For the deeper sense of life I should always question German thought, or English thought, or Scandinavian thought. The older races see the world more clearly, but they feel less deeply. That may be one reason for the deficiency which I have mentioned. But there must be another.

I think it is this:—one must have children in order to write a great poem about them. Those English authors whose poems I have quoted to you were all fathers, loving fathers. They have children of their own, and they have

suffered and enjoyed for the sake of their little ones. Also observe that none of the great poems were written by young men. I very much doubt whether a young man could write a good poem about children. A young man cannot understand children—unless he be an exceptional genius like the great story-teller Andersen. Now the grand romantic movement of the nineteenth century in French poetry was the work of young men, who were busy with ambitions and ideas having nothing to do with the life of children. Look through the poems of the great French singers of that movement—Gautier, Baudelaire, Alfred de Musset, Leconte de Lisle, José-Maria de Heredia, Sully-Prudhomme,—all the school in fact, which came to be known as the Parnassiens, —and you will find nothing worth mentioning about children in the whole mass of their work. Victor Hugo, the chief of the romantic movement, only began to write about children in his old age. The other men gave their youth to the study of sense-beauty chiefly; and, somehow or other, it seems to me that a tendency toward the sensuous is always antagonistic to the proper understanding of children and of domestic affection. A sensual man cannot love a child,—cannot understand a child. Now I do not wish to imply that the romantic poetry of France is inferior to the romantic poetry of England; and I do not wish to suggest that it is not to be admired because it is much more sensuous. We must take it as we find it. But I do mean to say that there has been a sensuous element in French poetry incompatible with such forms of deeper and more generous emotion as find expression in English poems about children. They are emotions which necessarily exclude one another. Perhaps this is in itself a proof that there is something divine in childhood; and that we must become more or less unselfish in order to understand the charm of it.

CHAPTER XII

SOME FOREIGN POEMS ON JAPANESE SUBJECTS

THE Western poet and writer of romance has exactly the same kind of difficulty in comprehending Eastern subjects as you have in comprehending Western subjects. You will commonly find references to Japanese love poems of the popular kind, made in such a way as to indicate the writer's belief that such poems refer to married life or at least to a courtship relation. No Western writer who has not lived for many years in the East, could write correctly about anything on this subject; and even after a long stay in the country he might be unable to understand. Therefore a great deal of Western poetry written about Japan must seem to you all wrong, and I cannot hope to offer you many specimens of work in this direction that could deserve your praise. Yet there is some poetry so fine on the subject of Japan that I think you would admire it and I am sure that you should know it. A proof of really great art is that it is generally true—it seldom falls into the misapprehensions to which minor art is liable. What do you think of the fact that the finest poetry ever written upon a Japanese subject by any Western poet has been written by a man who never saw the land? But he is a member of the French Academy, a great and true lover of art, and without a living superior in that most difficult form of poetry, the sonnet. In the time of thirty years he produced only one very small volume of sonnets, but so fine are these that they were lifted to the very highest place in poetical distinction. I may say that there are now only three really great French poets—survivals of the grand romantic school. These are Leconte de Lisle, Sully-Prudhomme, and José-Maria de Heredia. It is

the last of whom I am speaking. As you can tell by his name, he is not a Frenchman either by birth or blood, but a Spaniard, or rather a Spanish creole, born in Cuba. Heredia knows Japan only through pictures, armour, objects of art in museums, paintings and carvings. Remembering this, I think that you will find that he does wonderfully well. It is true that he puts a woman in one of his pictures, but I think that his management of his subject is very much nearer the truth than that of almost any writer who has attempted to describe old Japan. And you must understand that the following sonnet is essentially intended to be a picture—to produce upon the mind exactly the same effect that a picture does, with the addition of such life as poetry can give.

LE SAMOURAÏ

C'était un homme à deux sabres.

D'un doigt distrait frôlant la sonore bîva,
A travers les bambous tressés en fine latte,
Elle a vu, par la plage éblouissante et plate,
S'avancer le vainqueur que son amour rêva.

C'est lui. Sabres au flanc, l'éventail haut, il va.
La cordelière rouge et le gland écarlate
Coupent l'armure sombre, et, sur l'épaule, éclate
Le blason de Hizen ou de Tokungawa.

Ce beau guerrier vêtu de lames et de plaques,
Sous le bronze, la soie et les brillantes laques,
Semble un crustacé noir, gigantesque et vermeil.

Il l'a vue. Il sourit dans la barbe du masque,
Et son pas plus hâtif fait reluire au soleil
Les deux antennes d'or qui tremblent à son casque.

"Lightly touching her *biva* with heedless finger, she has perceived, through the finely woven bamboo screen, the conqueror, lovingly thought of, approach over the dazzling level of the beach.

"It is he. With his swords at his side, he advances, holding up his fan. The red girdle and the scarlet tassel appear

in sharply cut relief against the dark armour; and upon his shoulder, glitters a crest of Hizen or of Tokungawa.

"This handsome warrior sheathed with his scales and plates of metal, under his bronze, his silk and glimmering lacquer, seems a crustacean gigantic, black and vermilion.

"He has caught sight of her. Under the beaver of the war mask he smiles, and his quickened step makes to glitter in the sun the two antennæ of gold that quiver upon his helmet."

The comparison of a warrior in full armour to a gigantic crab or lobster, especially lobster, is not exactly new. Victor Hugo has used it before in French literature, just as Carlyle has used it in English literature; indeed the image could not fail to occur to the artist in any country where the study of armour has been carried on. But here the poet does not speak of any particular creature; he uses only the generic term, crustacean, the vagueness of which makes the comparison much more effective. I think you can see the whole picture at once. It is a Japanese colour-print,—some ancient interior, lighted by the sun of a great summer day; and a woman looking through a bamboo blind toward the sea-shore, where she sees a warrior approaching. He divines that he is seen; but if he smiles, it is only because the smile is hidden by his iron mask. The only sign of any sentiment on his part is that he walks a little quicker. Still more amazing is a companion picture, containing only a solitary figure:

LE DAÏMIO

Matin de bataille.

Sous le noir fouet de guerre à quadruple pompon,
L'étalon belliqueux en hennissant se cabre
Et fait bruire, avec de cliquetis de sabre,
La cuirasse de bronze aux lames du jupon.

Le Chef vêtu d'airain, de laque et de crépon.
Otant le masque à poils de son visage glabre,
Regarde le volcan sur un ciel de cinabre
Dresser la neige où rit l'aurore du Nippon.

Mais il a vu, vers l'Est éclabussé d'or, l'astre,
Glorieux d'éclairer ce matin de désastre,
Poindre, orbe éblouissant, au-dessus de la mer;

Et, pour couvrir ses yeux dont pas un cil ne bouge,
Il ouvre d'un seul coup son éventail de fer
Où dans le satin blanc se lève un Soleil rouge.

"Under the black war whip with its quadruple pompon, the fierce stallion, whinnying, curvets, and makes the rider's bronze cuirasse ring against the plates of his shirt of mail, with a sound like the clashing of sword blades.

"The Chief, clad in bronze and lacquer and silken crape, removing the bearded masque from his beardless face, turns his gaze to the great volcano, lifting its snows into the cinnabar sky where the dawn of Nippon begins to smile.

"Nay! he has already seen the gold-spattered day star, gloriously illuminating the morning of disaster, rise, a blinding disk, above the seas. And, to shade his eyes, on both of which not even a single eyelash stirs, he opens with one quick movement his iron fan, wherein upon a field of white satin there rises a crimson sun."

Of course this hasty translation is very poor; and you can only get from it the signification and colour of the picture—the beautiful sonority and luminosity of the French is all gone. Nevertheless, I am sure that the more you study the original the more you will see how fine it is. Here also is a Japanese colour-print. We see the figure of the horseman on the shore, in the light of dawn; behind him the still dark sky of night; before him the crimson dawn, and Fuji white against the red sky. And in the open fan, with its red sun, we have a grim suggestion of the day of blood that is about to be; that is all. But whoever reads that sonnet will never forget it; it burns into the memory. So, indeed, does everything that Heredia writes. Unfortunately he has not yet written anything more about Japan.

I have quoted Heredia because I think that no other poet has even approached him in the attempt to make a Japanese

picture—though many others have tried; and the French, nearly always, have done much better than the English, because they are more naturally artists. Indeed one must be something of an artist to write anything in the way of good poetry on a Japanese subject. If you look at the collection, "Poems of Places," in the library, you will see how poorly Japan is there represented; the only respectable piece of foreign work being by Longfellow, and that is only about Japanese vases. But since then some English poems have appeared which are at least worthy of Japanese notice.

CHAPTER XIII

SOME FAIRY LITERATURE

I SUPPOSE you know by this time that the word "fairy" is a very modern word as used in the sense of spirit. The original meaning of the word was magic, supernatural power, and the old English writers used it in this sense. So does Sir Walter Scott sometimes. The word used to be spelled "faerie;" and the term "faerie land" originally meant "land of magic." Much later the term was applied to a supernatural being or person, for which the real English word was El, or Elf.

The El-people were Northern fairies. But where did the whole conception of fairies come from? The Romans had their Fatæ, in many respects like our fairies. But there are a great many curious ideas regarding fairies which we must look to the history of religion to explain. When the Christian Church first began to exercise a great influence in the old Roman world, its priests never even dreamed of telling the people that there were no such things as gods or spirits. Quite the contrary. The Church said that all the gods and spirits of the Greek and Roman world really existed, only they were no true gods but evil spirits who took the shape of gods. Gradually all the shadowy people of all beliefs were transformed in the popular imagination; they were no longer worshipped, but they were feared. To worship them constituted the crime of magic.

So much for the classical part of the belief. Now when the Northern races overran Southern Europe, they brought other superstitions with them from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany—especially superstitions of the El-people. It would have been of no use for the Church to tell these

men that the El-people did not exist; moreover, the Church was inclined to believe that they did exist. So they were left to keep the belief in the El-people, on condition that they did not worship them.

The Celtic peoples in Ireland, England, Scotland, and Western France, the original populations conquered by the men of the North, had very strange beliefs of their own about spirits inhabiting woods, rivers and mountains, spirits capable of assuming a hundred forms. Christianity tolerated beliefs of this kind also. They have not yet disappeared. In Scotland, they are beginning to disappear, because of the spread of education and of industry. Ireland and Britanny remain especially the regions in which fairy beliefs widely prevail; and the attachment of the people there to religion may have something to do with the continuance of the belief in fairies.

So you see that there are three elements in the belief about fairies, the Northern, the classical and the Celtic. Mingled altogether, these three elements eventually produced a wonderful amount of romantic, poetic and also terrible imagination. In the early part of the nineteenth century a great deal of attention was given to fairy literature, principally owing to the influence of Sir Walter Scott. Fairy stories of foreign origin were translated into English in great numbers. In the latter part of the century there was for a time something of a popular reaction against the romantic and supernatural element either in prose or in poetry. But now another reaction has set in, and fairy literature has again become popular. It has one representative poet, William Butler Yeats, who himself collected a great number of stories and legends about fairies from the peasantry of Southern Ireland.

Now to give a detailed account of fairy superstitions would be of little use in this place; for a great deal of ghostly detail at one time has the effect of numbing the imagination, and the student cannot readily perceive the literary value of these details,—a fact that Walter Scott

perceived long ago. His words were: "The supernatural is a spring that is particularly apt to lose its elasticity, if too much pressed upon." The best way to learn about the romantic side of fairy beliefs is to read the poems and stories themselves, a little at a time. If you read much of this kind of thing at once you are likely to get tired of it, or at least to feel your intellect offended by the sense of the improbable. Yet I think that you will be interested by a little piece called "The Host of the Air," which is the best modern fairy poem by far that I know of. By "modern" in this case I mean produced in our own time; for the fairy poem of Yeats is also modern, in so far as it belongs to the century.

O'Driscoll drove with a song,
The wild duck and the drake,
From the tall and the tufted reeds
Of the drear Hart Lake.

And he saw how the reeds grew dark
At the coming of night tide,
And dreamed of the long dim hair
Of Bridget his bride.

He heard while he sang and dreamed
A piper piping away,
And never was piping so sad,
And never was piping so gay.

And he saw young men and young girls
Who danced on a level place
And Bridget his bride among them,
With a sad and a gay face.

The dancers crowded about him,
And many a sweet thing said,
And a young man brought him red wine
And a young girl white bread.

But Bridget drew him by the sleeve,
Away from the merry bands,

To old men playing at cards
With a twinkling of ancient hands.

The bread and the wine had a doom,
For these were the host of the air;
He sat and played in a dream
Of her long dim hair.

He played with the merry old men
And thought not of evil chance,
Until one bore Bridget his bride
Away from the merry dance.

He bore her away in his arms,
The handsomest young man there,
And his neck and his breast and his arms
Were drowned in her long dim hair.

O'Driscoll got up from the grass
And scattered the cards with a cry;
But the old men and dancers were gone,
As a cloud faded into the sky.

He knew now the host of the air,
And his heart was blackened by dread;
And he ran to the door of his house:—
Old women were keening the dead.

But he heard high up in the air
A piper piping away,
And never was piping so sad,
And never was piping so gay!

This is not consummate verse, but as a fairy poem it could not be surpassed. It has, in an extraordinary way, the power of communicating the pleasure of fear, which is a great art in poetry. And the words, the fancies, are all of the strange kind which should belong to so strange a story. How naturally the enchantment begins: a man is amusing himself in a lonesome place by driving away the wild birds, which are protected by the fairies. Night is coming, and for the first time he notices how tall the grass looks beside

the lake, and how black against the sunset. But it is beautiful too, and makes him think of the beautiful long dusky hair of the young wife he has just married. The next moment, as he walks along the shore he finds himself in a pleasure party, among young people whom he thinks he knows, and there is his wife too. They treat him very kindly and play cards with him. He is quite happy. They are fairies, but he does not know, and he is not yet in their power. But they bring him wine and bread, wine red as blood, bread white as flesh. He eats and drinks; now the fairies have power to take their revenge. They disappear, he runs home in terrible fear, and as he comes to his house he hears a death-cry. His bride is dead. She has been taken by the fairies. It was her spirit that he saw at the dancing. At that time the spirit might have returned to the body, but when he ate the fairy bread and drank the fairy wine, he really gave his young bride's life away.

You may be here reminded of some of the old Japanese folk stories; there are many Western fairy tales which resemble them. But the fairy belief is much more terrible and gloomy; there is no humour in it; it is the subject of supreme fear. Now this little composition, simple as it looks, contains a great deal of information about fairy beliefs that you would not notice at first sight. Perhaps you did not notice the contradiction of the statement about the music being sad and merry at the same time, and about the face of the bride being at once sad and glad. One of the signs by which a fairy may be known is that even when smiling and laughing there is something very sad both in the tone of voice and the look of the eyes. And the music which the fairy plays, however lively it seems, has a penetrating melancholy tone. In many parts of the country it is generally understood that you must not annoy the wild birds without reason. If you do, fairies will take revenge. If you taste their food, there is no more hope for you. I think you will remember Miss Rossetti's poem on the subject of tasting fairy-food, the poem "Goblin Market."

This is the same idea. After eating such food one withers and dies. But how about the power to take away the life of another person who does not taste?

There is a queer imagination about this. When fairies want to take a person away from this world into fairy-land, the Irish say that they make the person melancholy, tired of life. If you are melancholy and do not care whether yon live or die, the fairies get power to take you away. You die and your soul becomes a fairy. But you can never go to heaven after that. The condition of fairy existence is happiness in this world only; there is no other world for them, and no immortality. This is one form of the belief. The darker form is that all fairies are eventually doomed to eternal fire, and that every seven years one must be taken away unless a human being can be offered as a substitute. Upon the latter belief was founded the very beautiful English ballad of "Tam Lin," the best indeed of all the English fairy ballads. Its beauty lies in the fact that it pictures the courage of love against supernatural fear.

Of course the most famous fairy literature belongs to popular literature, to the literature of the ballad; but for the moment I am intending only to call your attention to celebrated poems of a less known variety, and I shall not quote from works in dialect. So only recommending you to study the ballad just mentioned, I shall go on to speak of its theme as handled by various eminent poets. One of these was Sir Samuel Ferguson, a poet of very considerable ability, some of whose works will live long in English literature. His "Fairy Thorn" is justly celebrated, not only as excellent poetry, but as having extraordinary power in arousing the sensation of the weird. The story is of three country girls, who go out to dance upon a hillside, and on the way invite a fourth, the most beautiful girl in the village, to accompany them. They begin to dance.

> The merry maidens four have ranged them in a row,
> Between each lovely couple a stately rowan stem,

And away in mazes wavy like skimming birds they go,—
  Oh, never caroll'd bird like them!

But solemn is the silence of the silvery haze
  That drinks away their voices in echoless repose,
And dreamily the evening has still'd the haunted braes,
  And dreamier the gloaming grows.

And sinking one by one, like lark-notes from the sky
  When the falcon's shadow saileth across the open shaw,
Are hush'd the maidens' voices, as cowering down they lie
  In the flutter of their sudden awe.

For, from the air above and the grassy ground beneath,
  And from the mountain-ashes and the old whitethorn between,
A power of faint enchantment doth through their beings breathe,
  And they sink down together on the green.

They sink together silent, and, stealing side by side,
  They fling their lovely arms o'er their drooping necks so fair,
Then vainly strive again their naked arms to hide,
  For their shrinking necks again are bare.

Thus clasp'd and prostrate all, with their heads together bow'd,
  Soft o'er their bosoms beating—the only human sound—
They hear the silky footsteps of the silent fairy crowd,
  Like a river in the air, gliding round.

Nor scream can any raise, nor prayer can any say,
  But wild, wild, the terror of the speechless three,
For they feel fair Anna Grace drawn silently away,
  By whom they dare not look to see.

They feel their tresses twine with her parting locks of gold,
  And the curls elastic falling, as her head withdraws;
They feel her sliding arms from their tranced arms unfold,
  But they dare not look to see the cause:

For heavy on their senses the faint enchantment lies
  Through all that night of anguish and perilous amaze;
And neither fear nor wonder can ope their quivering eyes,
  Or their limbs from the cold ground raise.

So they remain until morning, when the enchantment is dissolved; then they fly home in terror. But from that night they pine away, and die within the year. As for the girl stolen away, she is never seen or heard of again. I have not quoted the whole of the poem, but it is all very beautiful and very weird. Notice even the weirdness of these lines describing the dance:

They're glancing through the glimmer of the quiet eve,
  Away in milky wavings of neck and ankle bare;
The heavy-sliding stream in its sleepy song they leave,
  And the crags in the ghostly air.

Now this has wonderful merits, especially because it embodies the sensation of a bad dream; it describes the feeling of nightmare with which everybody is familiar. As the girls dance, the air seems to become sick and strange about them, and the voice makes no sound. This is a dream. Next, they cannot move. This again is a dream. They dare not look to see what is coming, but they hear it come. It does not touch them; but they feel their friend being silently pulled away from between them, and cannot help her. All this is very faithful to the experience of an evil dream. Indeed, most kinds of supernatural fear are believed to have had their origin in the experience of sleep.

Ferguson's poem is perhaps the best minor work in this direction, but a greater poet than he in some respects, Mr. Robert Buchanan, has also produced a very strange fairy poem, "The Faëry Foster-Mother." This brings us to a new phase of the superstition.

It is believed that occasionally, when a fairy mother is not able to nourish her own child, she will steal away some human mother who has milk, and force her to act as foster-mother for the fairy baby. Mysterious disappearances of peasant women are sometimes thus accounted for in Ireland. Very possibly the woman has been killed, or lost in a bog. But the people say, "She was taken by the little

folk for a foster-mother." Mr. Buchanan attempts to imagine the feelings of the mother in such a situation. His poem is very interesting, but it has not the same kind of value as Mr. Ferguson's, nor is it put into that dreamy verse which adds so much to the effect of "The Fairy Thorn." I shall quote a few lines. The poem is a monologue; the mother is speaking to the fairy child.

Bright Eyes, Light Eyes! Daughter of a Fay!
I had not been a wedded wife a twelve-month and a day,
I had not nurs'd my little one a month upon my knee,
When down among the blue-bell banks rose elfins three times three,
They gripp'd me by the raven hair, I could not cry for fear,
They put a hempen rope around my waist and dragg'd me here,
They made me sit and give thee suck as mortal mothers can,
Bright Eyes, Light Eyes! strange and weak and wan!

Dim Face, Grim Face! lie ye there so still?
Thy red, red lips are at my breast, and thou may'st suck thy fill;
But know ye, tho' I hold thee firm, and rock thee to and fro,
'Tis not to soothe thee into sleep, but just to still my woe?
And know ye, when I lean so calm against the wall of stone,
'Tis when I shut my eyes and try to think thou art mine own?
And know ye, tho' my milk be here, my heart is far away,
Dim Face, Grim Face! Daughter of a Fay!
Gold Hair, Cold Hair! Daughter to a King!
Wrapp'd in bands of snow-white silk with jewels glittering,
Tiny slippers of the gold upon thy feet so thin,
Silver cradle velvet-lin'd for thee to slumber in,
Pygmy pages, crimson-hair'd, to serve thee on their knees,
To fan thy face with ferns and bring thee honey bags of bees,—
I was but a peasant lass, my babe had but the milk,
Gold Hair, Cold Hair! raimented in silk!

The weakness here is in the human interest. Although full of imagination and not without art, this poem touches neither our sense of pity nor our sense of fear. But it is worth reading, and it illustrates a side of the fairy belief very seldom touched upon. That is especially why I quoted from it. But I had another reason. In the first stanza the fairy child is addressed as "Bright Eyes," and the sugges-

tion is of beauty; in the second stanza the child's face is spoken of as dim, grim. This is not a contradiction; the face of the fairy child is supposed to change suddenly and strangely. And because of this supposition the horrible superstition about changelings once prevailed very extensively in all English-speaking countries. What is a changeling?

One method which the fairies had of stealing human children, according to popular fancy, was to leave a fairy child in place of the human child. At first the fairy child resembled the stolen child so much that the mother was deceived; but later on the child would become ugly and fierce, and show all the dispositions of a goblin. If ill-treated, it would first revenge itself and then vanish away. Now you all know that during the first six months after birth the face of the little child changes very curiously, so that you hear the parents saying one day, "He is like his uncle," another day, "He is like his grandfather." In the time when people were superstitious in Europe, this changing of the child's face seemed to them supernatural and suspicious. Many a mother thought that her real child had been stolen and in exchange a fairy child put in its place. How was she to find out the truth? Only in one way—by putting her baby upon burning coals or burning wood. Hundreds of children were actually burned alive by their own mothers, because of this frightful fancy. The mother thought the fairy child would disappear, when placed upon the fire, but there was nothing supernatural to be seen. It is very curious to notice that this belief crossed over the Atlantic to America with the first English settlers, and the Puritans of New England appear to have been affected by it. One tradition of the kind, preserved among the Quaker people of New England who fought bravely against superstition, has been made the subject of a very touching poem by Whittier, entitled "The Changeling." Like most of his best works, it is written in the simplest quatrains, and is worth quoting chiefly because of the emotional truth and tenderness which it expresses.

First we are told about the happy marriage of a young girl in the town of Hampton, and her fortunate choice of a husband. She has a little girl at the end of the year, and at first she is very happy with the child. But within another year the superstition takes hold of her. She has seen the face of the child change, and she begins not only to fear but to hate it. She actually asks her husband to prepare the fire upon which the child is to be placed.

"It's never my own little daughter,
  It's never my own," she said;
"The witches have stolen my Anna,
  And left me an imp instead.

"O, fair and sweet was my baby,
  Blue eyes, and hair of gold;
But this is ugly and wrinkled,
  Cross, and cunning, and old.

"I hate the touch of her fingers,
  I hate the feel of her skin;
It's not the milk from my bosom,
  But my blood, that she sucks in.

"My face grows sharp with the torment,
  Look! my arms are skin and bone!—
Rake open the red coals, goodman,
  And the witch shall have her own."

For it was thought, when the child was put in the fire, the evil spirit would come to save it. Happily the "goodman" in this case was a man of common sense and kind heart, and he answers his wife's cruel wish by simply kneeling down and making this touching prayer to the great All-Father:

"Thy daughter is weak and blind;
Let her sight come back, and clothe her
  Once more in her right mind.

"Lead her out of this evil shadow,
  Out of these fancies wild;
Let the holy love of the mother
  Turn again to her child.

"Make her lips like the lips of Mary
Kissing her blessed Son;
Let her hands, like the hands of Jesus,
Rest on her little one."

By this method, kind and wise, of meeting the superstitious terror, the illusion is dissipated; the mother soon becomes shamed and horrified at her fear, on finding that her husband only considers it a madness of the mind. This poem, founded on fact, is followed by another which is well worth reading, called "Kallundborg Church." This is the story of a man who, in order to obtain a girl in marriage, makes a bargain with the fairies of the ground to build him a church. The fairies agree, but on the condition that when the church is finished, he must be able to tell the name of the builder; otherwise they will take his eyes and his heart out of his body in payment. Happily he is saved by hearing the fairy wife of the builder singing a song in which her husband's name is mentioned. This is little more than a translation of a very famous Norse poem upon the same subject.

Even the serious Wordsworth touched a little upon fairy lore; you will find a sonnet by him entitled "The Faëry Chasm." This is not remarkable enough to quote here; I mention it only to show how far the influence of fairy superstitions colour the work even of so solemn a poet as he. All the poets of note at the beginning of the century gave attention to this subject. Scott's influence, as I said, was the greatest of all in making fairy literature fashionable, in lifting it up to the highest level of romantic poetry. He did this especially by collecting all the peasant songs and legends that he could find, writing them down from the lips of the peasants themselves, and afterwards publishing them in the "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border." Southey did much work in the same direction. Shelley was almost a fairy himself; and though in no page in his work will you find a real fairy poem, the spirit of all his composition is strongly coloured and etherealized by the study

of fairy beliefs. Keats produced the most beautiful original fairy ballad of his time, perhaps the most beautiful of all modern time, "La Belle Dame sans Merci." Even Byron attempted fairy stories in verse, but his genius did not lie in that field, and his work in that kind only served to show how the spirit of Scott had affected him. Minor writers did a great deal towards fairy literature during the same period; and Lewis's "Tales of Wonder" embodied much valuable research in regard to fairy beliefs. With the new poetry of Tennyson, and the Tennyson group, there was a change, but a change of method rather than of substance. Tennyson himself has touched fairy topics with extraordinary skill, and all through his "Idylls," as well as in his earlier poems, you will find evidence of the manner in which he comprehended the romantic side of fairy superstition. Rossetti has embodied many of the superstitions in his extraordinary work, for instance, in the story of "Rose Mary." Browning shows fairy lights here and there, and very weird ones; perhaps the most notable example of his skill in this field is the wonderful tale of "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," an old German goblin-story, which he put into poetical form for the sake of a child friend. Swinburne has used some fairy literature in imitation of the Northern dialect ballads; but one of his most notable compositions, "Laus Veneris," though not avowedly what is called commonly a fairy tale, really is a fairy tale, perhaps stranger and more touching than all the fairy tales of the Middle Ages. Then in William Morris's "Earthly Paradise" you will find an immense collection of fairy legends beautifully told; and numerous other such legends are scattered through other volumes of his, about which I hope to give you a short lecture before long. Previously I spoke to you about what several of the later minor poets, notably Miss Rossetti, had done in the fairy tale. You will see from such brief notes as these how large is still the relation of the fairy superstitions to English literature. Even such grave critics as Edmund Gosse and Stopford Brooke have con-

descended to sing fairy songs. And perhaps among the now living poets of genius the best imitator of fairy ballads is Rudyard Kipling. Whenever Kipling writes a poem or a ballad, however, he usually has a larger purpose than at first appears, and his "Last Rhyme of True Thomas" deserves mentioning here, not simply because of its wonderful excellence as weird poetry, but because it expresses the nobility and the power of the poet as a teacher and an artist. It was written when there was some discussion about calling Kipling to the laureateship, which you know was given to Alfred Austen, a very low fourth or fifth class poet. It then occurred to Kipling to express his thought about that matter in the form of a ballad. A king comes to make a knight of "True Thomas," the famous hero of many old Scotch ballads. But Thomas laughs at the offer of such honour. He takes his fairy harp and sings, and the king weeps. He plays again, and the king laughs. A third time he plays, and the king wants to go to war; a fourth time he plays, and the king becomes humble and gentle like a little child. Then says Thomas, "I can make you do whatever I wish, can make you laugh or weep or rage at my will; is it not ridiculous for you to talk about making me a knight?" I need scarcely explain the excellent irony concealed behind these quaint verses. Were they not written in dialect, I should like to quote them.

Now you may be interested to know that even to-day serious fairy dramas are written. Of course, on the Celtic stage a great deal is borrowed from fairy tales, and operas and the most extravagant of what are called spectacular dramas are made more interesting by the introduction of fairy personages and fairy dancers. The dark side of the belief is less often dealt with. But "The Land of Heart's Desire" is the name of a fairy drama recently composed by William Butler Yeats which has been acted with some success, and which is interesting as showing you some new possibilities. It is a very short composition treating only of a single episode. A family at night, seated about the fire,

are startled by the entrance of a little child who appears to have lost her way. In the house there is a priest, who at once suspects that the child is not a human being. The interest of the whole action is made to lie in the way this fairy child deludes priest, parents, husband, and servants successively, in order to steal away the daughter-in-law, the new bride. Though the conditions are supernatural, the play of emotions is purely and intensely human and thus an impossible situation is made to become intensely interesting. For example, the strange child observes a crucifix upon the wall of the room as she enters, and she makes them take it way. The method by which she obliges them to take it away, notwithstanding their zealous belief in its power to protect them, is delightfully managed.

THE CHILD

What is that ugly thing on the black cross?

FATHER HART

You cannot know how naughty your words are!
That is our Blessed Lord.

THE CHILD

Hide it away!

BRIDGET

I have begun to be afraid again.

THE CHILD

Hide it away!

MAURTEEN

That would be wickedness!

BRIDGET

That would be sacreledge!

THE CHILD

The tortured thing!
Hide it away!

This and what follows is supremely natural, and we are not at all surprised when the priest is eventually overcome by the appeal to his human and paternal side. The single expression "tortured thing" is here sufficient to show the artist.

You may ask perhaps why I give so much time to a discussion of foreign superstition in foreign literature. This is really worth while. I am quite sure that it is, but not because the superstition happens to be Western. When you can judge of the value that such ideas have been to European poetry and romance, you will be better able to understand the possible future value to your own literature of Eastern beliefs that are now passing or likely to pass away. To an unimaginative and dryly practical man such things are simply superstition, absurd rubbish. But to the true poet or dramatist or story-teller they are all, or nearly all, of priceless value. The whole question is or should be how to use them.

CHAPTER XIV

POEMS ON MUSIC

POEMS on music did not occupy an important place in English literature until within our own day. I do not mean that poems on this subject were few in number, or that some of them were not famous even a hundred years ago. But such poems as that of Milton, "At a Solemn Music," were not famous at all because of the subject, but because of some thought or some beauty of expression not dependent upon the subject. Many Elizabethan poems referred to music; but they are not admired for that reason; they are simply love poems, and the connection of them with music in itself is very slight indeed. As a matter of fact, not only is musical development a very modern growth; but the sense of music, the ability to understand and to enjoy harmony is something new in the world. It is as if men were getting a sixth sense in addition to the five which they originally possessed. Gifted as they were in other ways, the old Greeks knew nothing of music in the sense of modern harmony. They had melody, and books of musical philosophy; but they had no conception of music based upon a combination of the different notes sounded at the same time. Only at their great games were there any vocal performances which made even an approach to real harmony; then boys and men sang together certain hymns; and the treble voices of the boys blending with the deeper voices of the men may have produced a very simple kind of harmony. But of instrumental harmony they had no real knowledge.

Even in modern Europe the art of music developed only in recent times; and therefore it is only to recent times that we can look for any remarkable English poems on the sub-

ject. Very modern indeed are the few that we possess which can take high rank. And these were written chiefly by Robert Browning, who was himself an excellent musician. In fact nobody except a musician could have written some of his compositions; and in consequence parts are incomprehensible to anybody who is not a musician. They are technical in wording, and professional in suggestion. But some of the poems deal rather with the art and the philosophy of music than with the science of it. And these we can profitably study. I myself know nothing about music—not simply for want of study, but for want of something much more important, a natural ear for music. Unless born with that gift the study of music is useless—as well try to study colour if born blind. I am telling you this that you may understand that the poems which I am going to talk to you about can be liked and enjoyed without any knowledge of music at all. They are philosophical and emotional—not technical.

Well, the first piece is entitled "A Toccata of Galuppi's." Galuppi was an Italian musician who lived at Venice in the days of the great Venetian Republic,—in the time of luxury and splendour; and he composed a great many Toccatas, which is a name given to a kind of very joyous or whimsical or passionate music formerly played upon an instrument called a clavichord. There are no clavichords now because the piano has taken the place of such instruments; but a clavichord looked very much like a small piano.

Even if some of you, like myself, should not happen to understand harmony you all know that certain kinds of music excite within us certain kinds of emotion. Melodies do this quite as well as harmonies, though less elaborately. Have you ever asked yourselves what is the reason that a certain melody touches our hearts—makes us feel sad, while another kind will make us feel happy and smile and want to dance? Only evolutional philosophy attempted an answer to that question in modern times. The mystery is the same as in the case of a human voice. You hear a certain very sweet voice; and the sound of it makes you wish to love

the person possessing it—even though you have not seen the face at all. On the other hand we sometimes hear a voice so disagreeable that we cannot help disliking the owner of that voice, though he has never given us any cause for offence. Now the effect of music is, after all, only the same effect as that of many voices; and the explanation of the feeling in both cases is fundamentally the same. For thousands and thousands of generations men have been accustomed to associate certain sounds with ideas of pleasure and kindness and joy, and others with ideas of sadness and pain and fear. The new born child feels such pleasures or such pains in the tones of voices heard—long before any thinking is really possible. Of all sounds music most bestirs the memory of race-experience within us. But can this art do more? Can it tell us some story of the past? Can it make us see things that happened hundreds of years ago? I do not think it can. But Browning says that it can and says this so beautifully and so weirdly that we almost believe it. Besides he was a musician and he ought to know. Listening to an old Toccata by Galuppi he sees and hears what happened in Venice hundreds of years ago and he knows from that music the character of the man that wrote it, and the story of his life:—

Oh, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 'tis with such a heavy mind!

Here you come with your old music, and here 's all the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants were the kings,
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?

Ay, because the sea 's the street there; and 'tis arched by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept the carnival:
I was never out of England—it 's as if I saw it all!

"Oh, Baldassaro, this is a very sad thing! I cannot make any mistake about the meaning of your music—not to

understand you would prove me to be a very stupid person. But, although I know what you mean, it makes me very very sad indeed.

"There is this old music of yours, and what does it tell us? . . . Oh, that was the way—was it?—that people lived in Venice, the wonderful city where the merchants lived like kings, and where the Doge used every year to perform a marriage ceremony with the sea for spouse—dropping a ring of gold into the water.

"I know that the wonderful church of St. Mark is there, and the bridge—I forgot the name—the bridge with houses on, over which the Jew Shylock used to go, in Shakespeare's play. Although I was never outside England—your music makes me see Venice just as if I had been there—and not the Venice of to-day, but the Venice of long ago, the gorgeous, luxurious Venice that was once the great city of pleasure. Now, what was the life of Venice when you wrote this music? I think I know."

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm in May?
Balls and masks began at midnight, burning ever to mid-day
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you say?

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red,—
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might base his head?

"Now I see, the music says just what you saw, Galuppi—tell me, am I not guessing right? The young people of your time used to have their season of amusement from the month of May when the sea began to be warm? Then was the time of balls and the masked ball—when they began to dance at mid-night and remained dancing with all the lights burning until noon of the next day; and then they would make arrangements to meet each other the day after.

"Why, I can even see those figures—the handsome young men, in their velvet dresses, all wearing swords; and what beauties those Venetian women were! Here is one—I can see her—such a lady, cheeks rounded with the downy fullness of

youth, and her bright red lips, and her beautiful little head —looking as light upon her neck as a flower upon its stalk —and, then, what a beautiful bosom for a man to lay his head upon. Am I not right? Why, I can even hear what those people said; I can see how they conducted themselves while you were making music for them."

Well, (and it was graceful of them) they'd break talk off and afford
—She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he, to finger on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminish'd, sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions—'Must we die?'
Those commiserating sevenths—'Life might last! we can but try!'

'Were you happy?'—'Yes.'—'And are you still as happy?'—'Yes. And you?'
—'Then, more kisses!'—'Did *I* stop them, when a million seemed so few?'
Hark! the dominant's persistence, till it must be answered to!

"It was kind of such grand people to stop their amusement for a time to listen to your playing. The woman, she condescended to remain quiet; but she showed her emotion by biting her velvet mask between her little pearly teeth; and he stood still too; but his fingers kept beating time to your music upon the hilt of his sword;—and the two presently began whispering to each other about their last secret meeting.

"But suddenly the music began to make them sorrowful. There was something in it that murmured to them, 'However happy you are, or think you are now—remember that you must die.' But then did not the music also hint to them, since you must die—perhaps quickly—why not endeavour to enjoy yourselves as much as possible in the meantime?"

In the eighth verse the questions are alternately whispered by the woman and the man. It is the man who asks first, "Were you happy when we met last?" Also it is the man who asks for kisses, and the woman who answers that she never tried to prevent him from having as many as he wished for. The "dominant's persistence which must be

answered to" naturally suggests the lover as the dominant, compelling the woman to yield her lips to him. But, here the music requires some detailed explanation; for dominant signifies also the fifth note of the scale, and the *answering* musically implies that an octave is struck. The rule is that in the perfect cadence or full-cadence, the dominant must be followed by the tonic. Also we must say a word about the other notes referred to. "Lesser thirds" signify minor chords—the composition must be in the melancholy or minor key. A lesser third is composed of one tone and a semi-tone. Greater thirds are composed of two full tones—such tones would constitute music written in the major, or gladsome key. But all this is plaintive music. The effect of minor thirds is to give a feeling of tenderness or grief. "Diminished sixth" signifies sixth having one semi-tone (less than a minor sixth)—the effect is necessarily plaintive. "Suspensions" and "solutions" signify something which can not be fully explained without musical demonstration. But I will try to explain it in this way. In such music as Toccata there are many notes both low and high being played at the same time. Suppose that the higher notes are suddenly stopped while the lower notes continue: that is suspension. The result is a slightly painful feeling, which is only solved when the high notes are continued again: that is the solution.

One more phrase requires explanation. "Commiserating seventh." The poet means minor seventh, or rather minor and diminished seventh which makes the most pleasing of all musical dissonances, or artistic discords. The discord of a minor seventh is almost as sweet as a concord and has a very penetrating effect of gentle sounds. But remember that in Browning's wonderful seventh verse every musical term has a double meaning—the technical meaning and the emotional meaning also, referring to the feeling of the man and the woman whispering together.

So an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare say!
'Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!
I can always leave off talking, when I hear a master play.'

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
Death came tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.

"And so the answer came—an octave—an octave of kisses. And of course they praised your music—especially. 'Brave, well done, Galuppi—that music of yours was really great music. You are just as clever at serious music as at merry music. And I can always stop talking to listen to such music as you play.' That is just what that foolish woman said, I suppose.

"And then they went away from you to enjoy themselves; and they enjoyed themselves until they died. Some of those people might as well never have lived at all—because they did nothing either good or bad. Others did a great many things which had better not have been done. But a day came when death quietly took them where the light of day never shines. That is the story which your music tells me. But now why did you write it?"

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music, till I creep thro' every nerve.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was burned—
'Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice earned!
The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be discerned.

'Yours for instance, you know physics, something of geology,
Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their degree;
Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not die, it can not be!

'As for Venice and its people, merely born to bloom and drop,
Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop:
What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

'Dust and ashes!' So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old.

Towards the end of the Toccata the music has suddenly changed—has become, not passionately but coldly melancholy;—and this is what puzzles the poet hearing it. "Of

course I understand—but why do you make me suddenly feel so chilly, so weirdly unhappy? You tell me that all this gay life of old Venice was folly and selfishness; and that the penalty of folly and lust and selfishness is death and oblivion. Yet those people had souls—did they not? Your music answers —certainly very little—when there was no more pleasure for them. The souls probably dried up and disappeared. The spirit of a man or of a woman endures according to its power of effort for good, for truth, for something useful,—for whatever distinguishes the soul of a man from the soul of a beast. A person who knows mathematical science, any branch of knowledge that develops the mind, such a man or woman might live on after death. But those silly people of Venice! No! That is what your music tells me, O Galuppi, and I suppose it is true—and I cannot find the heart to dispute with you as to whether it is all true. Yet —when I think of those beautiful women,—all those women with their golden hair, painted by Titian or Tintoretto,—and ask myself what has become of their beauty and that hair of gold—I feel very sad and chilly, like an old man!"

The above poem is very weird. I think you will recognize that. But the next poem which I am going to read to you is of a very different kind; it is perhaps the grandest thing that Browning has written, and it is not a thought of sadness, but a thought of joy,—an outcry of deep faith in the order of the universe and the immortality of everything good. It will require a great deal of explanation; but it is so beautiful that I am sure you will not be tired. The title is "Abt Vogler." Abt Vogler was a great German musician, especially famous as an improviser. To improvise, in a musical sense, means to compose music instantaneously without study,—to sit down and produce perfect music that nobody ever heard before, and to do this as easily as a bird sings. Any musician who is a real master of his instrument can improvise a little; with some men the gift is magical and extraordinary. There have been men who drove their audience half mad with pleasure by improvising:—women

would tear the ornaments out of their hair, and out of their ears, and from their necks, and throw them around the stage as gifts to the musician. But, of course, what is only improvised cannot be preserved. Neither can it be reproduced—unless indeed one should employ a phonograph for that especial purpose. The musician himself cannot exactly repeat what he has suddenly composed while sitting before his instrument, inspired only by his heart. Now Browning imagines the feeling of a great musician who regrets the evanescence of some wonderful piece of music that he has just improvised. What he played was so beautiful that it brought tears to his own eyes; but it will never be heard again in this world, never. He could not possibly repeat it. And he asks himself why anything so beautiful should be allowed by Heaven to die. Now you know the subject. The poem begins thus:

Would that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,
  Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon willed
  Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,
  Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep removed,—
Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable Name,
  And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he loved!

The reference is, of course, to "The Arabian Nights," and to the Oriental legend of how King Solomon built a palace in a moment in order to please the Queen of Sheba. He uttered the name of God, or perhaps, touched that magical ring he wore which had the name of God engraved upon it; and immediately there came in answer to the Almighty Word, millions of angels from Heaven, millions of devils from Hell, countless spirits of the elements. And these said with one voice like the roar of the sea, "What does our Lord desire?" And Solomon answered, "Build me a palace immediately to please this fair one by my side." Thereupon those innumerable spirits instantly began the labour—needing no instruction—requiring no plan;—the demons, accustomed to the depth

of the earth over and under the hell, laid the tremendous foundation in a moment;—the myriad spirits of air built up the walls of marvellous substance;—and the spirits of heaven completed the glittering roof, with its numberless domes and pinnacles and shimmering points of gold. There is the story that occurred to the mind of the musician. "O," he says, "how I wish that I could, like Solomon, make the keys of my organ build up for me a palace of sound that would not pass away—solid music that would endure to the sight and memory of men for ever. Now indeed, I am building, with these fingers of mine, a marvellous palace of sound; but in another moment it will have passed away for ever!"

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,
  This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise!
Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now combine,
  Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise!
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,
  Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well,
  Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

Here the symbolism is still that of the Oriental legend,—describing the work of the demons and the Jinn (Djinn). "O," the poet says, "how I wish that this beautiful palace of sound could remain, like the palace of Solomon,—this beautiful palace which the keys of my organ, white and black, like the Djinn and Demons, built so quickly and so eagerly thronged and so eagerly hurried to build, and how wonderfully did all of them help me,—sometimes separately, sometimes combining together,—all zealous to finish the work quickly and to glorify the greatness of their master by making it beautiful. Here, these deep base notes were like Demons, diving down under the earth—down even to the roof of hell to make the foundation. There they burrowed a moment and built the foundation, broad and enormous upon the very roots of the world. And then they would come up again, swimming through the air, having laid it upon the very fire-centres of the earth, where no one else

could have laid it—only those accustomed to live in fire!"

Now we see the walls rising, then the roof, and after the roof is complete, miracles happen.

And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion he was,
  Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest,
Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,
  Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest:
For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,
  When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire)
  Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul was in sight.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match man's birth.
  Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach the earth,
  As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the sky:
Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with mine,
  Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wandering star;
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not pale nor pine,
  For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near nor far.

There is a suggestion of the description of heaven in "The Revelations of St. John," where you will find the fancy of gold transparent as glass; but really the Arabs took the same idea from Christian books, or Jewish books; and Browning keeps to the Arabian legend very closely until the palace rises to the roof; even then, although he makes a reference to the dome of St. Peter's, his palace remains Arabian, with its peaks and pinnacles, and you know that the dome itself is more characteristic of Oriental than of Western architecture. But after this description, Browning's vision figures as something tremendous, unthought of by Arabian poets;—the sky itself bending down, the heaven of heavens itself stooping and glowing, to meet the astonishing structure that was soaring up to it. Then strange things appeared; stars came and fixed themselves as radiant points upon the tops of the pinnacles and the minarets,—and moons also, and meteors of wondrous brilliancy. I suppose you know that if a palace could be built to a certain height

of miles, the summits of the structure would no doubt exhibit electrical phenomena; and I think you must have read how certain attempts to climb the Himalayas were repeatedly defeated by electrical conditions. Browning very probably was thinking of such things, as a modern mind must think about them, when he imagines the real consequences of building a palace like Solomon's in the Arabian story. But his imagination goes much further than this, giving us a prodigious symbol of possible sympathy between heaven and earth, God and man. Please do not forget this suggestion, because we shall have it repeated presently. The whole idea of this poem is that music forms a kind of divine communication between God and mankind; and the palace—remember—is a palace of sound, of harmony, of music.

"Then others would proceed with the work of building the wall—these not flying, but marching in armies to the work. These were all of one kind, but there were many grades among them, ranks indicated by different crests (the poet still referring to the keys, comparing them to Jinn) and up to the sky they built the walls of transparent gold, and the ramparts, and the marvellous roof over all, a maze and splendour of light. Even so one may see, in Rome, on a night of a church festival, the dome of St. Peter illuminated, suddenly outlining itself against the sky like a structure of fire.

"And so the desire of the builder of sound, of the palace of music, seemed about to be attained. Attained? Attained —did I say? No, not half attained. For nature in her turn began to produce a structure of her own, worthy to rival the structure of man. And why not? For the earthly beginnings of humanity can have their accomplishment only in the world of the divine. Therefore the sky itself competing, bent downwards to reach the earth—just as the earthly work of music passion had striven to reach the sky. Then new splendours appeared in heaven, came down, came close, and touched the earthly summit; and every point and peak of the palace attracted a fiery star, and kept it there as a

glittering ornament. And these heavenly lights did not fade or fail—they could not. Heaven and earth had touched; distance and time were abolished. But there was even more than this: for that wonderful palace was peopled."

Nay more; for there wanted not who walked in the glare and glow,
  Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the Protoplast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should blow,
  Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at last;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the body and gone,
  But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth their new:
What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall be anon;
  And what is,—shall I say, matched both? for I was made perfect too.

"There were presences visible in that palace—wondrous beings,—superior to living men. They had come from the Protoplast—the still uncreated Essence of Life, the beginnings of formless existence. It had not been intended that these should so soon be born as men—it had been intended only that they should be born in hundreds of years to come, when the world should be more perfect than now. But they came into being when that wonderful palace appeared —thinking, 'This place is fit for us to live in.' And with these mingled also the wonderful dead of other ages—those who had gone to Paradise, but now came back, out of heaven, because they could find in this old earth of ours something as fair as paradise. In short, what had never happened before, happened when I made that music;—and what had been was the reflection of what will be in some heavenly future; and the present time became equal to all the past and all the future,—for even I, though only a man, felt myself infinite in that moment. Why?—"

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my soul,
  All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly forth,
All through music and me! For think, had I painted the whole,
  Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-worth:
Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect proceeds from cause,

Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list enrolled:—

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are!
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.
Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself is nought;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said:
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought;
And, there! Ye have heard and seen: consider and bow the head!

At the word "there" in the last line, you must understand the musician suddenly striking his hand upon the organ producing three different notes at the same time, so as to produce a harmony. The thought is this: If man has a strange power in anything it is music. Every note in music is only the common sound itself. You can hear it anywhere—in the voices of animals, birds or men, in the echoes of city life, in the noise of wood and shore. But let the musician take any one sound and mix it with two other sounds and out of those three sounds combined, what does he make? Not a sound, but something so much finer than any single sound that it may be called a star. If you mix blue and yellow together you get green; but green is only a colour, like yellow or blue. But mix three musical tones together, and you can hear something incomparably beyond the quality of any pure tone. Still, is this human? No, that is the work of God himself; and man—the musician—is only the instrument, the agent.

In the preceding verse, the musician says that if he had painted his conception, or made verses about it, then indeed people might have admired it as very artistic. But art is only, at best, a matter of obedience to laws—human laws, laws of passion. Music is not. Man does not make music—music is the work of the divine power only.

But, just because man does not make music—there is a possibility that it may last for ever.

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared;
  Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that come too slow;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,
  That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go.
Never to be again! But many more of the kind
  As good, nay, better perchance: is this your comfort to me?
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
  To the same, same self, same love, same God: ay, what was shall be.

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?
  Builder and maker, Thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same?
  Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
  The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
  On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist;
  Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
  When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
  The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
  Enough that He heard it once: we shall hear it by and by.

"Ah!—now it is gone, this beautiful palace of music which I composed;—and I know that it was good, because it made the tears come to my eyes, and to the eyes of those who listened." That is the highest praise that you can give to the artist, to let him see the tears that he makes to flow;—and he finds that such praise, in this case, comes too slow. Of course one who improvises us music, knows from the very first, that he cannot preserve it—he does not even think about that. "But it is gone. It will never be heard again, you say, and you also say that I should not regret it because I can make just as beautiful or better music in the future. But that is no comfort to me. I am a priest, you know—I hope for the future, because I do not believe that things pass away for ever,—I do not believe in vanishings.

No, I believe that the soul, the self, is for ever, and love and God;—I do not believe that even the past is dead: all that has been, which was good, shall be again."

"Yes, my music is gone, but only for a moment. I turn to the ineffable Name—He who makes houses that are built without hands;—for he knows what music that was, and whether it was worth preserving. How can I doubt that it shall be preserved, being good? Whatever is good never can be lost. Evil will be lost, only because evil in itself is nothing. It is like the silence between the notes of music—the silences that make music possible. But in itself it is only hush and void; and it will go. The good will not go. Of course in this world we have no perfect good—only fragments—only parts of a circle, broken arcs. But those broken arcs will make the Perfect Circle in the heaven to come."

"And everything that men have wished for, or hoped for or dreamed of good must live again in that heaven. I do not believe a reflection or likeness of it, but the very thing itself. There never has been any beauty or any good or any strength but will exist through all infinite time, if it has existed but once in the past. Yes, even for the musician, his improvisations, approved by the Lord of Eternity, will continue throughout that eternity, though they were composed in an hour only. And many other things with them—noble acts that were too noble for this world, brave acts that were too brave, love that was too great and too deep for this life, and so turned itself to heaven: all such things are but music to the ear of God. If he once heard any lover or any poet utter such beautiful music: that is sufficient proof that we shall hear of it also in the Eternity which is to come."

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
  For the fullness of the days? Have we withered or agonized?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue thence?
  Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should be prized?
Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
  Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear;

The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians know.

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:
I will be patient and proud, and sobrley acquiesce.
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying a while the heights I rolled from into the deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is found,
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.

"What is the meaning of our failures, our mistakes in this world—the real meaning? They are really the proof of the victories that we shall win in that time when all things shall be made perfect in heaven—the time of 'the fullness of the days,' to use the Scriptural expression. If in this world our minds or bodies decay and suffer pain—why is it? What is the meaning of pain—the meaning of death? The meaning is exactly the same as the meaning of silence in relation to music,—of pause in relation to harmony. If there were not such a thing as silence there could be no music—if there were no pauses, no rests between musical tones, there could be no real music. You must try to think of death and suffering and failure and loss only as the necessary pauses or silences in the eternal music of Life. Perhaps you will not believe this—perhaps you doubt that God is only to us like a great Musician; and that we are the music which He produces. All the music is but one vast harmony—death and pain but the pauses. You do not perhaps believe this, and you reason differently—especially when you are suffering a great deal, so that the world seems to you all wrong. Reason as much as you like; but I know. Music is a language in which God himself speaks; He whispers the secret of life into the ear of his musician."

The meaning of the last stanza is very difficult to paraphrase—indeed, to explain it properly, we ought to have an organ in the room, and a great musician to play it. So I shall try only to paraphrase it in a very general way, making notes on some technical difficulties.

"Well I must still live in this world for a time, though I would rather live in heaven. And the silence of earth—that silence which is pain and sorrow and failure, but which is only as I told you, one pause in the infinite music—now surrounds me again. A moment ago while playing, I was in heaven; but I must not complain; I must be patient, even though proud of my communication with the Divine; I must quietly submit to the will of the supreme Musician. But let me play a little more—let me now return to the ordinary music of the world. I have the 'common chord' again under my fingers—and I pass from it, by half notes, till I get down to the melancholy 'minor'—yes. And now I deaden this minor key to the 'ninth.' Ah, far away this music seems from the other! It is as if I had fallen from the heights of heaven, and were standing on strange ground, looking back with wonder at the altitude from which I fell. And I have really done this—I really ascended to celestial altitude, and fell from it—and now I am back to rest upon earth again! Do you hear this tone? The C Major—they call it the common time keynote in music. It represents very well the commonplace of life—the commonplace of everyday existence. But that everyday existence is mine, and I must be content with it. And I am glad—now I will go to sleep."

SUMMARY OF THE POEM

The musician, splendidly improvising, suddenly regrets that his improvisation must be lost. He thinks of Solomon, and the magical power of Solomon and wishes that by such power he could preserve his composition. But after all, he thinks it may be preserved by God. Whatever is beautiful and good cannot pass away—whether it be music or anything else. Presently he expresses his belief in this.

Music, in any case, is not like any other art—the charm of colour and form can be made by man; but the charm of music is made by God only: and the musician is his mouthpiece.

Through music man may yet hold communication with the Invisible Divine. From men of science the mystery of of the Universe is hidden, but it is not hidden from the musician. He knows.

The whole mystery of life is symbolized and explained by music. Without shadows we could not see objects clearly; without silence we could not have harmony. So, without death and pain, the great harmonies of life could not exist. God is a musician; death is only a pause in the notes of his music.

A word about Abt Vogler. He was a priest, as well as a musician, and very learned, but eccentric. Because he had arms and fingers of an extraordinary length, he was able to play music in a most astonishing way. He was very ugly and fat, and with his long arms is said to have looked like an ape. He lived in the time of Mozart and invented many new things in regard to musical instruments. In this poem there are thoughts from different German philosophers, with whose works Vogler was certainly acquainted. We have no reason to doubt that his beliefs have been correctly expressed by Browning. The finest stanza of the poem is No. 10.

The two preceding poems are unquestionably the finest compositions upon music in English literature, and though not the only ones that Browning wrote, they are certainly the best. There is another, entitled "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha." But this poem is much too technical for treatment in class. I must mention it, however, because it embodies the same artistic conception of music that we find in the previously quoted poems. Here again the writer attempts through the study of a musical composition, to understand exactly how the man felt and thought at the time when he wrote that music. He attempted to explain for us the psychological meaning of the music in its appeal to his own intellectual and moral feeling. This was a very novel, as well as a very romantic, manner of treating musical subjects. Browning therefore must be considered a great pioneer in

the treatment of musical subjects. He has set an example that will probably find many future imitators; but as yet nothing has been done in the same direction that is really worthy of notice.

I think that I cannot better conclude this rather tiresome discourse upon musical poetry than by quoting from a very light and beautiful composition by Tennyson bearing only a slight relation to the topics which we have been considering. It is entitled "Far—Far—Away (For Music)."

What sight so lured him thro' the fields he knew
As where earth's green stole into heaven's own hue,
Far—far—away?

What sound was dearest in his native dells?
The mellow lin-lan-lone of evening bells
Far—far—away?

What vague world-whisper, mystic pain or joy,
Thro' those three words would haunt him when a boy,
Far—far—away?

A whisper from his dawn of life? a breath
From some fair dawn beyond the doors of death
Far—far—away?

Far, far, how far? from o'er the gates of Birth,
The faint horizons, all the bounds of earth,
Far—far—away?

What charm in words, a charm no words could give?
O dying words, can Music make you live
Far—far—away?

In this delightful fantasy, as I may call it, we have perhaps an expression of the very same hope and doubt—a suggestion of the same wonder and of the same problems contained in these poems of Browning which we have been reading. You remember that both of the compositions suggest a possibility of divining through music the feelings of the person who has composed it at the time it was composed.

Let us now attempt a little paraphrase of the verses which I have just dictated:—

"What was it that could more strongly attract him, in the time when he was a little boy, and impel him to wander through the fields, as the mystery of the horizon—the riddle of that distance where earth and sky seemed to touch?

"What sound did he most love to hear in his childhood? It was the far-off music of the church-bell heard in the evening; and the charm of those tones was great for him because distance made them sound more sweetly.

"Distance—even the simple words 'far—far—away' were enough when he was a boy to give him strange feelings of joy and pain,—to fill his mind with pleasant fancies or with dim sadness.

"But why? what was the cause of these feelings,—this charm of mystery, this attraction of the remote? Were these feelings due to some more early remembered things that happened in his own earlier childhood—in the time otherwise forgotten, when he was a baby? Or, could there have been a memory yet farther back?—recollections from some other state of existence—a life before this? (The phrase 'beyond the doors of death' in the fourth stanza refers to past death).

"Far back in space, farther back in time—how far? From before this birth, from before this life,—beyond the dim horizon-line of all visible existence—was it thus? Could it be thus?

"But O, what a charm there was in those words 'far—far—away'? And what a charm may become mysteriously attached to the commonest word in common use! 'A charm no words can bear'—that is to say, the charm is not in the words themselves, but in the association in the memory attaching to the words. And, now," concludes the poet, "these words of mine, written for music—can music make them live, by lending to them some strange charm such as the charm of which I have been speaking?"

There is a reference in the last stanza to the common

saying which is true, that words are "preserved by the music." Even when the words of a song happen to be commonplace or stupid, if a beautiful air be written for that song, the words may live through centuries because of the melody attached to them. Well, music can certainly make words live. But the question is whether it can make thoughts and feelings live—whether the emotion experienced by a musician to-day can be felt by the person who studies his music in another two or three hundred years. It is a question worth thinking about, but it cannot be any more definitely answered at this moment, than it has been answered in that little poem by Tennyson.

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 footstep 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, linnet, 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 that 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.

CHAPTER XVI

SOME POEMS ON DEATH

THE term is drawing to a close and we shall hardly have time for any elaborate study; so I shall only attempt one more short lecture upon a special subject. Yesterday we were speaking of the classical and romantic spirit in poetry. It occurred to me that no subject could illustrate the differences of the two methods more forcibly than a selection of poems upon the subject of death. This, I need scarcely say, is the most serious of all subjects, naturally lending itself as an inspiration to the highest forms of sublime expression as well as to the most ordinary forms of simple pathos. It would seem to be especially fitted for classical treatment; indeed a majority of famous poems upon death are in classical form. The severe and constrained laws of classical composition would appear most suitable to a theme requiring solemnity and measured self-control. But I think that, opposite to almost any classical utterance upon this grim subject, I could place a romantic example that you would find much more touching and much more true to the real spirit of poetry. Let me now choose a couple of examples. The first I will take from Bryant's poem, "Thanatopsis," selected because it is perhaps more widely known than any other modern classical utterance which has achieved popularity in this relation. Bryant, you know, was an American poet, and he was almost the only American poet of real note who was frankly classical. Poe, Longfellow, Whittier, Emerson, Lowell,—these were all romanticists. Bryant has nothing of romance in his composition; but as a classic poet he was so far successful that some of his choice work now belongs to English literature as securely

as almost anything done by any minor English poet. These are the lines to which I refer:

> So live, that when thy summons comes to join
> The innumerable caravan, which moves
> To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
> His chamber in the silent halls of death,
> Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
> Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
> By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
> Like one that wraps the drapery of his couch
> About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

These lines are beautiful in a cold way. They express a great religious and moral duty, in relation to death. The imagery has a certain grandeur, especially the dim picture of humanity passing from birth to death as a caravan passes over the surface of a desert. Now, the "quarry-slave" means a slave employed at cutting stone in a quarry. Formerly such slaves were treated like prisoners; they were beaten while at work, and beaten also on their march from their quarters to the place of labour and back again. Indeed, this is still the treatment of many slaves in Northern Africa under Arab or Moorish rule, and it is to such rule that the poet refers. His lesson is this: If you live well, you need not be afraid to die. Try to live such a good life that when death comes you can think of it merely as a man thinks of having a pleasant sleep. Wicked men, on the other hand, think of death as the slave thinks of his going and coming, with terror, under the lash of the master. The lesson is good, and consoling, but it is not particularly original; and the greatest merit of the composition is the well-sounding blank verse. Now this is exactly according to classical canons. The verse is sonorous, correct and cold. Perhaps classic verse ought to be in such cases a little cold. One must not show too much emotion, especially in treating any vast and solemn subject. I think you will admire the lines if you study them carefully; but I think

you will admire much more a little thing, a very, very small thing, about a dead child, which I am going to quote to you as an example of romantic methods. It is a mother's dream about her little dead boy. Perhaps this dream was inspired by an old superstition, common to many parts of Europe, that the tears of the living cause pain and sorrow to the dead. At all events it is a very natural little composition; and the poet is William Barnes, who wrote a great deal of touching poetry in the dialect of Dorsetshire. This poem is not in dialect, but it is not according to classical rules at all; it is almost colloquial in its form.

THE MOTHER'S DREAM

I'd a dream to-night
As I fell asleep,
Oh! the touching sight
Makes me still to weep:
Of my little lad,
Gone to leave me sad,
Aye, the child I had,
But was not to keep.

As in heaven high,
I my child did seek,
There, in train, came by
Children fair and meek,
Each in lily white,
With a lamp alight;
Each was clear to sight,
But they did not speak.

Then, a little sad,
Came my child in turn,
But the lamp he had,
Oh! it did not burn;
He, to clear my doubt,
Said, half turn'd about,
'Your tears put it out;
Mother, never mourn.'

Of course you may say of the comparison that it is not quite fair,—that in the one case we have a cosmic and didactic idea, and in the other only an individual fancy. That is true. But were I to compare a classic fancy only with a romantic fancy you would probably find the contrast still more powerful. A cosmic idea reinforced by moral sentiment ought to produce an emotional thrill. Do Bryant's lines produce such a thrill? I do not think that they do. But "The Mother's Dream" does produce a thrill of purely natural emotion, and though you may forget the words of the poem, you cannot forget the fancy. On the other hand, if you forget the actual words of Bryant's composition there is very little left to think about. The images are grand, but they are indistinct and dark and leave no impression upon the memory. Classical verse depends upon form; the essence of romantic verse may be independent of form. Probably no fervent believer in classic rules would agree with the poet in his choice of a five-syllable measure,—a very primitive measure indeed. Yet where there is true poetic feeling, the measure is a matter of secondary importance.

Can we mix the two systems together? Can we make a poem at once romantic and classic? Certainly, but it requires a particular emotional character to do this well. Very few succeed in it. However, on this very subject of death I have a little poem by one of Tennyson's brothers, Charles Tennyson-Turner. Here is a poem not only upon a very solemn subject, but even somewhat religious into the bargain, and written by a clergyman, and put into the severe form of the sonnet,—and yet it touches. It does not touch merely because it expresses a generous horror of the abominable doctrine that all persons who are not Christians must go to hell, and be burned alive for ever and ever; it touches really because it is full of true romantic spirit, full of warm human feeling, upon which no cold restraint or rule has been placed. It is about the mummy of an Egyptian girl. The poet lost in Egypt a daughter called

Mary. She had been taken to Egypt for the sake of the climate. Some time afterward the bereaved father was shown the mummy of a little girl probably dead for a thousand years before an English foot ever trod the land of Egypt. I suppose he then thought to himself, "Four or five thousand years ago the father and the mother of this little girl must have had the same pain that I and my wife now have. They embalmed their little daughter, no doubt, with many tears and prayers; and they buried with her a little scroll of Egyptian prayers and charms for the little spirit to repeat in the next world. How wicked it would be to think that all the faith and love of those millions who lived in times past have been of no moral value!" And then he wrote these lines:

> When the four quarters of the world shall rise,
> Men, women, children, at the Judgment-time,
> Perchance this Memphian girl, dead ere her prime,
> Shall drop her mask, and with dark new-born eyes
> Salute our English Mary, loved and lost;
> The Father knows her little scroll of prayer,
> And life as pure as His Egyptian air;
> For, though she knew not Jesus, nor the cost
> At which He won the world, she learn'd to pray;
> And though our own sweet babe on Christ's good name
> Spent her last breath, premonish'd and advised
> Of Him, and in His glorious Church baptized,
> She will not spurn the old-world child away,
> Nor put her poor embalméd heart to shame.

The beauty of this poem I find to be chiefly the struggle between the man's religious prejudices, his religious education, and the natural emotion that forces him to think more generously about matters of this kind than other clergymen might do. You will see that he thinks his own little daughter buried there will rise again at the Judgment Day, not in company with English sisters, but with the ghosts of the old Egyptian pagans, and very probably with the very little girl whose mummy he has been looking at. And he

thinks to himself, "Well, my daughter will love that little Egyptian girl and want to play with her. 'Tis true that the little girl was not a Christian, and my little girl was a very good Christian. But perhaps the father of all of us will find the Egyptian child to be quite as good and pure as my own; she must have been good; had she not learned to pray?" Now for a clergyman of the English church even to go thus far in the direction of religious generosity in poetry is rather remarkable; you may think that he must have been under deep emotion when he wrote. He wrote this with perfect classical correctness, but he infused into the poem an emotional warmth and colour that are quite contrary to classical tradition. As I said before, it is the suggestion of struggle between religion and love that makes for me the great beauty of the sonnet.

The best sonnet ever written by Longfellow, "Nature," shows the same blending of romantic feeling with classical elegance. The imagery is of the most ordinary kind; not so the refined verse which contains it. Although called "Nature," this is really a poem on death.

As a fond mother, when the day is o'er,
  Leads by the hand her little child to bed,
  Half willing, half reluctant to be led,
  And leave his broken playthings on the floor,
Still gazing at them through the open door,
  Nor wholly reassured and comforted
  By promises of others in their stead,
  Which, though more splendid, may not please him more;
So Nature deals with us, and takes away
  Our playthings one by one, and by the hand
  Leads us to rest so gently, that we go
Scarce knowing if we wished to go or stay,
  Being too full of sleep to understand
  How far the unknown transcends the what we know.

You have all seen such a universal incident as the poet here describes—at least all of you who remember your own childhood, or who have some little child brother or

child sister to remind you of it. The child is very sorry about the breaking of its toys, and keeps playing with the pieces until it is time to go to sleep. Then the mother comes and says, "Now dear, it is better for you to sleep: do not fret about your toys,—I will buy you a much nicer toy tomorrow." So the child goes away guided by the mother's hand, but still he looks back regretfully towards the place where the broken toy is lying, thinking to himself, "Yes—but the new toy will not be so pretty as the broken one, I think!" In the same way when men become old and their work is only half done—therefore broken, as it were—death comes and says, "It is time for you to sleep." A man regrets thus having to go, in spite of the promise religion makes to him about happier things and more beautiful things in the next world. But he is not able to think very much about the matter. The touch of death makes him too sleepy to be very much afraid or very sorry, just as the child is too sleepy at bed time even to talk about broken toys left behind. The kind of death here described is what has been called euthanasia, the fortunate or happy death that sometimes comes to men in extreme old age, and puts them to sleep quite gently, without any pain, never to wake again.

I have begun with these examples of the two methods only as illustrative. But you remember that the title of this lecture is "*Some* Poems on Death," and I am not going to attempt so vast a thing as a general lecture upon the subject of Death in English poetry. That would require years of lecturing. What I am going to talk about are only certain striking later poems upon this topic,—poems illustrating the later thoughts of the century about death scientifically or philosophically.

The poems which I am now going to cite will refer both to death as signifying change and to the dead as signifying a living influence—the inherited tendencies which shape character. For example, here is a little poem about the dead who continue to live with us. To you perhaps the

ideas in this poem will appear very old, but to Western thought they are new; and in any event the treatment of the idea is new. The title is "The Dead."

> The dead abide with us! Though stark and cold
> Earth seems to grip them, they are with us still;
> They have forged our chains of being for good or ill;
> And their invisible hands these hands yet hold.
> Our perishable bodies are the mould
> In which their strong imperishable will—
> Mortality's deep yearning to fulfil—
> Hath grown incorporate through dim time untold.
> Vibrations infinite of life in death,
> As a star's travelling light survives its star!
> So may we hold our lives, that when we are
> The fate of those who then will draw this breath,
> They shall not drag us to their judgment-bar,
> And curse the heritage which we bequeath.

This composition by Mathilde Blind, a great friend of the scientist Wallace and now widely known as a writer of verse upon scientific subjects, contains a full declaration of the evolutional doctrine of heredity. I suppose you know the wonderful fact here referred to about the light of the star continuing to live long after the star is dead. Astronomers have proved to us that we are still able to see in the skies an appearance of stars that really died many thousands of years ago. But those stars were so far away that it took their light all that time to reach this world; and thus we are still able to see the light, because it began to travel towards us before the stars died, and has not yet finished coming. The suggestion is that the will of the dead, in the meaning of tendency as well as in that of desire, survives the body and continues to act, much as the light of a dead star continues to travel.

Within late years the idea of this moral responsibility to the future and to the past has begun to make itself more and more felt in Western poetry. In Eastern poetry it is old; in Western poetry it is almost new. A hundred

years ago no person would have thought of writing such stanzas as these following, at least in a poem upon the brotherhood of nations with a common origin. The nations are England and the United States, and the poem, by Helen Gray Cone, is addressed to "Fair England."

> What! phantoms are we, spectre-thin,
> Unfathered, out of nothing born?
> Did Being in this world begin
> With blaze of yestermorn?
>
> Nay! sacred Life, a scarlet thread,
> Through lost unnumbered lives has run;
> No strength can tear us from the dead;
> The sire is in the son.

Such an utterance would have startled the English eighteenth century; perhaps the only poet of Johnson's time who could have found the meaning of it would have been Blake. But the idea that the will of the dead influences the acts and the thoughts of the living is not merely expressed in a general way in latter-day poetry. Sometimes fancy furnishes details, incidents, suggestions that touch us better than any general statement could do. Here I have a little poem by Richard Burton, called "The Forefather." It is interesting as a sign of the thought of the times. A young man in the country lying down to sleep at night is startled by the strange sensation of being in a battle. Everything about him is dark and silent; yet it seems to him that he can hear, as if it were in his own heart, the clash of arms, the shouting of the captains, all the clamour of a great contest; and he can even feel the excitement of battle within himself. Is he dreaming? No, he is awake; and these ideas and feelings come to him involuntarily. But let us quote his own words and his interpretation of the mystery:

> Here at the country inn,
> I lie in my quiet bed,
> And the ardent onrush of armies
> Throbs and throbs in my head.

Why, in this calm, sweet place,
  Where only silence is heard,
Am I ware of the crash of conflict,—
  Is my blood to battle stirred?

Without, the night is blessed
  With the smell of pines, with stars;
Within, is the mood of slumber,
  The healing of daytime scars.

'T is strange,—yet I am thrall
  To epic agonies;
The tumult of myriads dying
  Is borne to me on the breeze.

Mayhap in the long ago
  My forefather grim and stark
Stood in some hell of carnage,
  Faced forward, fell in the dark;

And I, who have always known
  Peace with her dove-like ways,
Am gripped by his martial spirit
  Here in the after days.

I cannot rightly tell:
  I lie, from all stress apart,
And the ardent onrush of armies
  Surges hot through my heart.

Perhaps you will have noticed the expression in the second stanza about silence being heard; and if you have never seen it before it may seem strange to you. Western poets often use this expression to signify the most intense silence. It is very much like another and commoner expression, "You could almost hear the night breathe." Such expressions imply only that in the great stillness sounds can be heard which are never heard in the daytime.

An Englishwoman, Alice Meynell, has produced a beautiful poem upon the topic we are discussing. It is called "The Modern Poet." The idea of the poem is less fantastic

than that of the one which I have given above, but it is more touching and more true; it is simply that power to see and to feel the beautiful, and the power to express the vision or the feeling in poetical language, comes to us from the dead. The poet can write beautiful things only because the thoughts and the impulses of thousands, perhaps millions, of poetical ancestors are in his blood. If he delights in the clear blue of a summer sky, or the snowy beauty of mountain peaks, or the dancing of sunlight upon the waters, it is because the dead within him loved all these things and rejoiced in the Nature that inspires him to sing. The beauty of this composition is not confined to the thought, however; the similes are remarkably effective and imposing.

I come from nothing; but from where
Come the undying thoughts I bear?
  Down through long links of death and birth,
  From the past poets of the earth.
My immortality is there.

I am like the blossom of an hour,
But long, long vanished sun and shower
  Awoke my breath i' the young world's air.
  I track the past back everywhere
Through seed and flower and seed and flower.

Or I am like a stream that flows
Full of the cold springs that arose
  In morning lands, in distant hills;
  And down the plain my channel fills
With melting of forgotten snows.

Voices I have not heard possessed
My own fresh songs; my thoughts are blessed
  With relics of the far unknown;
  And mixed with memories not my own
The sweet streams throng into my breast.

Before this life began to be,
The happy songs that wake in me

Woke long ago, and far apart
Heavily on this little heart
Presses this immortality.

We shall see how beautiful this is better by a paraphrase:

"You say that I am come from Nothing. But where do the immortal thoughts which I have, come from? I know where they come from; from the thousand generations of the past, from millions and millions of brains and hearts that are dust, from myriads of long-dead poets these beautiful thoughts must have come to me. Only in thought is there any real immortality, and by thought I know myself immortal.

"It is true that I am only like the flower that lives but for a little time. But the race of flowers to which I belong was brought into existence millions of years ago. Dead suns ripened it, the soil of long vanished worlds nourished the roots of it. I can trace back the past through all times, through all the beginnings, beyond all the blossomings.

"Or this life of mine might be compared to a river flowing full of cold water, cold and pure water, water that rose in the clear springs of mountains too far away to be seen, in countries too far away to be visited. And in the great plain through which I flow I feel my channel filled with the melting of snow that fell so far away, so long ago, that its falling cannot be remembered.

"I hear speaking within my heart, voices that are not mine; and these voices also speak in the songs that I write. My very thoughts are not my own thoughts; thoughts of the dead, thoughts of the things that have happened in times unknown, in places unknown, are mixed with them, and the feelings and the ideas belonging to other lives and the memories of other lives pour into my heart.

"Before ever I was born, the joyful imaginations that I expressed in my poems existed in other minds, in other lives, at long intervals of time. And the whole emotion of dead worlds, of dead generations, presses upon my life. Hard it is to bear within one the weight of the past."

You will see the beauty of this more and more each time that you read it over. The suggestions are of the most general kind; but they are not less grand for that. However, examples of imagination of the same kind are not wanting, and some of them are very remarkable.

A French boy named Henri-Charles Read, who died at the age of nineteen, was the author of some very curious poetry on this subject. Young as he was, the great mystery of life oppressed him, the new thought of the nineteenth century only increased the weight of the riddle that troubled him. He was not able in so short a life to master the teachings of the new philosophy in regard to the problem, but he was able to express that problem in a very simple and touching way.

I think that God resolved to be
  Ungenerous when I came on earth,
And that the heart *He* gave to me
  Was old already ere my birth.

He placed within my youthful breast
  A worn-out heart—to save expense!—
A heart long tortured by unrest
  And torn by passion's violence.

Its thousand tender scars proclaim
  A thousand episodes of woe;—
And yet I know not how it came
  By all those wounds which hurt it so!

Within its chambers linger hosts
  Of passion's memories, never mine,—
Dead fires—dreams faded-out—the ghosts
  Of suns that long have ceased to shine.

Perfumes, deliriously sweet,
  Of loves that I have never known,
It holds—and burns with maddening heat
  For beauty I may never own.

O weirdest fate!—most ghastly woe!
Anguish unrivalled!—peerless pain!—
To wildly love—and never know
The object wildly loved in vain!

That a young boy should have felt these things is not at all wonderful; what is wonderful only is that without scientific teaching he should have been able to express the feeling so wonderfully. Undoubtedly the lad was a natural genius, and would have been a very great poet if gifted with the strength to live. But he was early carried off by a disease of the lungs. His few but remarkable poems are now well known to thinkers in every country of Europe. The last stanza of the little composition intimates, of course, that the awakening of this frail and beautiful talent was coincident with the first change from boyhood to manhood.

But there is another way in which the dead live on besides the path of hereditary tendency. They live not only in the minds and the hearts of their descendants; art also sometimes furnishes them with a body. You know some of the old Greek stories on this subject, perhaps; certainly you know many Chinese and Japanese stories about pictures or statues having ghosts, living with the life of that which they represented. Western poetry has very little on this subject, but the little is interesting in more ways than one. I do not speak of such stories as that of Pygmalion, who made the statue of a beautiful woman and fell in love with it, so that the gods took pity on him and made the statue alive. That story has really nothing to do with the subject of which I am speaking. I mean the idea that in painting a picture or making a statue, something of the soul of the person represented entered into the work. This is rather an Eastern than a Western fancy; and as I say, it has been very little treated by Western poets, although Edgar Poe has a prose story about an artist who painted so perfectly the picture of a girl that all her soul went out of her body into the picture, and she died. But we have one modern, indeed very recent poem about a Greek vase, which em-

bodies this notion in a very pretty way. It is by an American poet called Sherman.

Divinely shapen cup, thy lip
  Unto me seemeth thus to speak:
"Behold in me the workmanship,
  The grace and cunning of a Greek!

"Long ages since he mixed the clay,
  Whose sense of symmetry was such,
The labor of a single day
  Immortal grew beneath his touch.

"For dreaming while his fingers went
  Around this slender neck of mine,
The form of her he loved was blent
  With every matchless curve and line.

"Her loveliness to me he gave
  Who gave unto herself his heart,
That love and beauty from the grave
  Might rise and live again in art."

And hearing from thy lips this tale
  Of love and skill, of art and grace,
Thou seem'st to me no more the frail
  Memento of an older race:

But in thy form divinely wrought
  And figured o'er with fret and scroll,
I dream, by happy chance was caught,
  And dwelleth now, that maiden's soul.

There is exactly such an idea in the old Chinese story about that god of porcelain, once a human workman who burnt himself in a furnace in order that the vase which he was making by command of the Emperor should become perfect. The legend says that his soul went into the vase, and that, when tapped with a finger, it would utter the name of its maker.

I suppose that we have now read a sufficient number of illustrative poems on this subject. Before concluding, I

want you to notice particularly that the thoughts in the poems which I have quoted are not, in most cases, Western thoughts, and that the poems belong to a new era of imagination. They represent exotic influence, especially Oriental influence—partly Indian, no doubt, but also in part Chinese and Japanese. It is a very interesting subject to which we may return again, this influence of Eastern thought upon Western poetry. I think that it is constantly growing, and that we shall see and hear much more of it. And I may say that even Tennyson was slightly affected by these new influences before he passed away. His swan-song, "Crossing the Bar," owes most of its beauties to fancies much more Oriental than Occidental. The infinite sea of which he speaks in that poem, that sea with the moving of whose tides worlds and lives come and go, what is it after all but the Oriental Sea of Death and Birth?—and the Bark, what is it as a symbol but the ancient Buddhist Vessel of Faith, in which the virtues may pass to the further shore? Yet Tennyson was, after all, somewhat old-fashioned. If even he was inspired to create so enchanting a thing as "Crossing the Bar" by the new influences from the thought of the East, we may be tolerably sure that the poets of the present century, the new era just beginning, will produce work much more akin in thought and feeling to Eastern philosophical poetry than their predecessors of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER XVII

NOTE UPON AN UGLY SUBJECT

THE ugly subject is the literature of hate.

Hitherto we have been chiefly and properly concerned with the literature of higher things—love, beauty, heroism, courage. Can there be a literature of ugliness?—or, is moral ugliness or any kind of ugliness a fit subject for art?

Do you know that this is a very hard question to answer in these days? The old Greeks would have answered it unqualifiedly. Perhaps that is the best way to answer it. We need not long discuss whether a single statue or a single picture of something merely ugly and foul ought to be made or not. The public judgment would answer such a question effectively. But it is very different if we ask whether there is any reason for representing the ugly figure in a general way. Drama at once furnishes us an answer. The figures of drama are horrible as well as beautiful, bad as well as good,—and the greater the dramatist, as a rule, the greater the evil in his bad character. In Shakespeare, for example, the dark side serves to make visible the bright side; evil is the shadow that brings out the brilliancy of the picture.

So there can be no dispute as to the place of the evil and the ugly in drama and in dramatic fiction. But it is quite another matter, when we have to consider an attempt to portray the ugliness and the evil all by itself. Is that right? Is it art? I do not think it is. But if I say that I do not think it is right, I am raising at once an endless and perfectly useless question about the moral purpose in art. If I were asked to give a reason why I do not think it is right to represent what is ugly in a statue or in a picture, I should be obliged to take refuge in an emotional expression of the

feelings which the ugly arouses in me. So that my argument would be reduced to something like this: "I do not like it, because it hurts my feelings, grates upon my nerves, spoils my pleasure in life." And that is only a personal argument. Not all people feel the same way. There was a Spanish painter who used to paint putrefied corpses, and he still has admirers.

Now the literature of satire mostly belongs to the ugly side of existence. When we were considering the history of eighteenth century literature, we were obliged to remark the cruelty and malignity which the literary men displayed in that age. They wrote, in the most perfect of verse, the most abominable things about each other; they very frequently slandered each other in a most shameful manner; with words they painted pictures of each other quite as horrible as those pictures of rotten corpses which the Spanish artist made. And, like that Spanish artist, they still have admirers. Students are obliged as a duty to read some of the eighteenth century satires; all the great critics admire them. Good old Dr. Johnson did not; he declared the most admired of them to be a useless display of malignity and jealousy. But people laugh at Dr. Johnson's moral judgment in these days. Much greater scholars than Dr. Johnson persist in praising many things that he condemned.

In the face of this high testimony to the value of the satirical literature of the eighteenth century, we cannot merely rely like Dr. Johnson upon our moral feelings. We must think about the matter—we must try to find a good clear reason for the praise given to wicked things cleverly said by men like Pope. Are we to praise clever wickedness? Have we any right to admire it? Or would not such admiration be proof that we are not particularly good ourselves?

The real answer to the problem can only be found by the perception of something in the wicked cleverness which is not wicked cleverness. Here excellence of verse forms does not explain the matter at all. There must be something else—something that is not false but true. Now what is this thing?

It is truth in the delineation, not of a man, but of a type.

There is the secret of the admiration still given to some of the unjust and cruel satires of Pope and of his school. It is not because the satires were true pictures or caricatures of any living person in particular, but because they were true pictures of general types of human weakness which have always existed, which exist to-day and which will exist to-morrow. By their general truth they lived, and for nothing else can they be admired. And, observe, whenever Pope's satires do not reflect something larger than personal hate, nobody admires him. It is only when the personal hate has given him eyes to see larger facts, that we may really praise the utterance of the hatred. No better example of the power to see a type and to fix that type need be quoted than the few lines of Pope's very best satire, the lines about Addison. I think you have read enough about Addison to know that Pope's picture of him was not true, that Pope himself afterwards acknowledged that it was not true, that Addison was a gentle, courteous, correct, and somewhat cold person, but not a hypocrite nor a sneak. Yet for a moment Pope suspecting him of a mean act, conceived a picture of hypocrisy and meanness, such as had never before been written, and he printed it. Let us read a few lines:

> Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
> Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne.
> View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
> And hate for arts that caus'd himself to rise;
> Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
> And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
> Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
> Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;
> Alike reserv'd to blame, or to commend,
> A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend.*

It does not matter who was intended by such piercing lines as these; every one feels in reading them that they are unimpeachably true, atrociously and mercilessly true, of a

* *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, ll. 197—206.

certain type of human nature that is as old as the history of civilization. It is not to be wondered at that the art of drawing so true a picture in a dozen lines should still be praised; it is not to be wondered at that certain lines have become household words and English idioms—for instance, the lines about damning with faint praise and about making other people sneer, without sneering yourself.

I think we can say that the artistic question is partly solved by such a quotation. If hatred gives new eyes to a man and enables him to see more general truth in a powerful way, the literature of hatred may be worthy of a certain kind of admiration. But I should certainly think that to shrink from all such literature is a proof of a generous mind.

CHAPTER XVIII

ON TREE SPIRITS IN WESTERN POETRY

REALLY one of the very best ways in which to utilise the resources of European poetry you will find to be the establishment of the romantic or emotional relations of that poetry to Japanese literature and legend. Last year one of the literary class wrote for me a very pretty version of the wonderful old story of the *Sanjiusan-gendo,* and I thought, while reading it, that it was rather strange that no effort had been made to call the attention of literary students to the beautiful stories of the same class existing in Western literature. To-day I am going to attempt to show you how the same idea as that of the Japanese legend produced some beautiful literature in the West.

The best stories of this class—indeed, the best of any class belonging to what has so well been called zoological mythology,—are Greek. Many of the Greek stories you have heard something about. You know that the cypress tree was once a beautiful boy called Kuparissos (if we spell the name in the true Greek way—otherwise Cyparissus) and that he killed, by mistake, a pet deer, and therefore would have died of grief, had not the god changed him into the tree that still bears his name. You have heard no doubt that the anemone, or "wind-flower," is the flower of young Adonis—that he was changed into it after having been mortally wounded by a wild boar. It was at that time that the rose, originally white, became red; for the goddess Aphrodite, hurrying to help Adonis, tore her beautiful feet with the thorns of the plant, whose flowers remained red with her blood. Doubtless you know that the flower Narcissus bears the name of the handsome youth who refused the love of the

nymph Echo, but thereafter, beholding his own face and figure reflected in water, fell in love with the shadow of himself, and pined away, and was turned into a flower. And there is the hyacinth, the flower of the youth Hyacinthos, accidentally killed by the god of the sun, while the two were playing at quoits; the god changed him into the plant, and the flowers of the plant bear the Greek letters "ai! ai!"—a cry of lamentation. I need not speak of the story of the laurel tree and of many others. Enough to say that in Greek mythology almost every plant, tree, bird, insect had some such legend attached to it. These are commonly known facts. It is less generally understood that the Greeks considered everything infused with spirit,—that rocks and trees, clouds and waters, had their particular souls or animating principles. Every river, every spring, every tree had its particular god, or demi-god. To touch the subject at all satisfactorily would require a great deal of time, and I can only suggest to you in a brief way that the thoughts of the Greeks about the ubiquity of divine or half-divine persons were much like those of the Far East in respect to the ancient gods, with some differences of a particularly humane and often beautiful kind. To-day I shall speak only of the beliefs about trees; this properly introduces the topic of the lecture.

Tree-spirits were considered by the Greeks as of two kinds. The spirits of fruit-trees were called Meliades; the spirits of all other trees were called Dryads or Hamadryads. They were principally female, and sometimes appeared in the shapes of beautiful women. They had great supernatural power, but their lives depended altogether upon the life of the tree, and when the tree died the spirits also died. Accordingly they were very anxious about their trees, and they could reward or punish men according to whether their trees were respected or injured. To cut down certain trees was therefore considered very dangerous. In Japanese legends, the *enoki* is often mentioned as a tree which it is dangerous to cut down. A number of Greek trees were not only thus

dreaded, but were regularly propitiated with sacrifice.

Of course the literary value of this tree mythology depends, like that of kindred Japanese myth, upon human interest,—upon the poetry or sentiment attaching to the old stories. Some are very beautiful and very sad; they not only touch our emotions, they also teach us a moral, or remind us, in a way never to be forgotten, of certain weaknesses in human will. One such story, perhaps the most beautiful of all, is the story of Rhœcus (the English poet Landor spells the name Rhaicos, but the other spelling is more correct; the true Greek word would be Rhoikos). This was a man who loved a tree spirit. It had been his intention to cut down her tree; but she came out of her tree, and pleaded with Rhœcus so eloquently and so tenderly that he promised to spare the tree on condition that she would love him, because he saw that she was more beautiful than any mortal woman. Then she told him that it was dangerous to love the spirit of a tree. "I am," she said, "very jealous; and if you should ever show affection to any other person, or if you should refuse to come to me when I send for you, then all will end between us, and you will become very unhappy. It is not a trifling matter to love a daughter of the gods." Of course the young man said what a lover might be expected to say under such circumstances. But the nymph said, "There is yet another matter to remember: the life of man is not long, but the life of a tree is very long—I shall still be young and beautiful when you are old and dead. Are you not as rash as Tithonus was?" Rhœcus still made sincere promises and protestations; and at last the tree spirit agreed to his wishes. "But," she said, "I cannot live with you in your father's house, I must not go so far away from my tree, and you can only come to me when there is nobody else in the woods. Whenever I wish you to come I will send you a bee. When you see the bee flying round your head, then come you must. If you cannot come, I shall know that something terrible has happened." Everything was happy after that for a long time. But one day

Rhœcus, together with a number of young friends, began to play a game of draughts; and while he was playing the bee came. Then he forgot all about the tree spirit and struck the bee with his hand impatiently. The bee came back again, and he hit it again. All of a sudden he remembered—jumped up from the draught board and ran to the forest. But he was too late. The bee had been there before him; the tree of the nymph was withered and dead—she was gone for ever. Then Rhœcus could not be comforted. He sat down before the dead tree, and presently he himself died of grief. That is the whole story in substance.

You will see that from a literary point of view, such a story may be treated in a variety of ways. The American poet Lowell treated it from a moral point of view; and I believe that it had been treated from a merely romantic point of view by several French poets. But Landor has certainly succeeded best with it; he retells it after the fashion of the idyllic poet, in a dialogue, and his scholarly knowledge of Greek literature and life shows to advantage in this version. I may remark that the Greek text of the original story is lost—probably for ever. It was the work of a writer called Charon, of Lampsacus—a name easy to remember, being the same as that of the ghostly ferryman who rowed the souls of the dead over the shadowy river Styx.

Now we shall read some extracts from Landor's beautiful rendering of the legend, to which he gives the title of "The Hamadryad." We need not read the introduction, as the composition is rather long. It begins with an account of how the father of Rhœcus orders his son to go and help a household servant cut down an oak tree in the wood. He goes to the tree and finds the servant axe in hand before it, and he notices that the servant hesitates to strike. "What is the matter?" asks the lad.

> "There are bees about,
> Or wasps, or hornets," said the cautious eld,
> "Look sharp, O son of Thallinos!" The youth
> Inclined his ear, afar, and warily,

And cavern'd in his hand. He heard a buzz
At first, and then the sound grew soft and clear,
And then divided into what seem'd tune,
And there were words upon it, plaintive words.
He turn'd, and said, "Echion! do not strike
That tree: it must be hollow; for some god
Speaks from within. Come thyself near." Again
Both turn'd toward it: and behold! there sat
Upon the moss below, with her two palms
Pressing it, on each side, a maid in form.
Downcast were her long eyelashes, and pale
Her cheek, but never mountain-ash display'd
Berries of colour like her lip so pure,
Nor were the anemones about her hair
Soft, smooth, and wavering like the face beneath.

The ghostly character of the tree is first revealed by a humming noise, which both men imagined to be made by bees. But listening carefully, they are startled to find that this is not the sound of humming, but the sound of a thin sweet voice that is uttering words, very sad words of fear and grief. And before this surprise is over, suddenly they see, sitting under the tree, a beautiful shape like a young girl, very pale, but with strangely red lips. Looking at her face, its lines appeared as uncertain and wavering as shapes of ripples on the surface of water; but there were living flowers in her hair, real, not ghostly flowers; for they were quite distinctly seen. There is something in the appearance that frightens both men, in spite of the beauty and the softness; the supernatural character is revealed by the fact that all the outlines of the shadow seem to be flowering—ready to vanish like smoke in another moment. But presently the sweet strange thin voice speaks, calling Rhœcus by name and bidding him send away the servant. The servant is only too glad to be sent away, for he is frightened almost to death; and then the tree spirit—for such she proves to be—begins to talk to the young man and to plead with him.

Hamad. And wouldst thou too shed the most innocent
Of blood? No vow demands it; no god wills
The oak to bleed.
Rhaicos. Who art thou? whence? why here?
And whither wouldst thou go? Among the robed
In white or saffron, or the hue that most
Resembles dawn or the clear sky, is none
Array'd as thou art. What so beautiful
As that gray robe which clings about thee close,
Like moss to stones adhering, leaves to trees,
Yet lets thy bosom rise and fall in turn,
As, touch'd by zephyrs, fall and rise the boughs
Of graceful platan by the river-side?
Hamad. Lovest thou well thy father's house?
Rhaicos. Indeed
I love it, well I love it, yet would leave
For thine, where'er it be, my father's house,
With all the marks upon the door, that show
My growth at every birthday since the third,
And all the charms, o'erpowering evil eyes,
My mother nail'd for me against my bed,
And the Cydonian bow (which thou shalt see)
Won in my race last spring from Eutychos.

The description here of the nymph is Landor's own—perhaps Lowell follows the Greek idea more closely in representing the nymph as naked; but the artistic device of the appearance of leaves and moss is finer, and a little more ghostly. As yet the young man has no idea that he is talking to a tree spirit; he only sees before him a charming maiden, so charming that he is willing not only to spare the tree at her request, but to give up everything for her,—even to leave his father's house and the things which youth delights in. Of course he does not yet understand what the question means as to whether he would not regret to leave his father's house. The tree spirit wanted him to say that he could not or would not leave his father's house, so that she might reply to him, by way of argument, "Then think how much you would make me suffer by destroying my

house—my tree!" But he is already so much in love with her that he answers in the very opposite way. There is a pretty naïveté, a boyish innocence, in his replies which paints his character very prettily; this is also one of Landor's inventions. The reference to the door with marks upon it showing how tall the boy was at each year from his childhood, is perhaps more English than Greek in thought; yet it is certainly a very human touch. It is a custom in England every year to measure the growth of a boy by making him stand with his back to a wall or door, and putting a little mark on the wall or door to show how high his head reached on such or such a date.

The conversation proceeds; the young man is still ignorant of who this beautiful person may be, and even when she asks him if he has never heard of the tree spirit, he does not think that he is talking to one. He can only tell her that he loves her; he arranges the moss smoothly under her tree, picking up and throwing away the little pebbles and fixing a corner to make a comfortable seat; and when she sits down again before him, he begs her to come with him to his father's house as his bride. But she answers:

Hamad. Nay; and of mine I cannot give thee part.
Rhaicos. Where is it?
Hamad. In this oak.
Rhaicos. Ay; now begins
The tale of Hamadryad: tell it through.
Hamad. Pray of thy father never to cut down
My tree; and promise him, as well thou mayst,
That every year he shall receive from me
More honey than will buy him nine fat sheep,
More wax than he will burn to all the gods.
Why fallest thou upon thy face? Some thorn
May scratch it, rash young man! Rise up; for shame!
Rhaicos. For shame I cannot rise. O pity me!
I dare not sue for love—but do not hate!
Let me once more behold thee—not once more,
But many days: let me love on—unloved!

I aimed too high: on my own head the bolt
Falls back, and pierces to the very brain.

But she comforts him—bids him not to be afraid—even promises to love him, only she cannot go to his house. Returning full of joy, the young man intercedes with his father for the tree—promising that he will every year obtain from that tree a certain quantity of wax and honey. The father is quite pleased and agrees not to destroy the tree. And every day Rhœcus goes to see the dryad in the woods. Sometimes he does not find her; then he is very unhappy. So to console him she tells him about her bee.

There is a bee
Whom I have fed, a bee who knows my thoughts
And executes my wishes: I will send
That messenger. If ever thou art false,
Drawn by another, own it not, but drive
My bee away: then shall I know my fate,
And—for thou must be wretched—weep at thine.

In other words, she vaguely threatens him, in case of unfaithfulness. It will make her very unhappy if he should love somebody else; but the result for him would be even worse.

From this point there is a considerable divergence between the treatment of the story by Landor and by the American author. Lowell represents the young man as rough, wine-flushed, playing for money with a number of riotous comrades. But, as you have already seen, such conduct would not be at all in accordance with Landor's conception of the character of Rhœcus, whom he depicts as an affectionate and gentle boy. In the English poem Rhœcus, or Rhaicos, does not play at draughts with rough companions, but only with his father; and he strikes the bee through the fault of forgetfulness only.

Rhaicos was sitting at his father's hearth:
Between them stood the table, not o'erspread
With fruits which autumn now profusely bore,

Nor anise cakes, nor odorous wine; but there
The draft-board was expanded; at which game
Triumphant sat old Thallinos; the son
Was puzzled, vex'd, discomfited, distraught.
A buzz was at his ear: up went his hand
And it was heard no longer. The poor bee
Return'd (but not until the morn shone bright)
And found the Hamadryad with her head
Upon her aching wrist, and show'd one wing
Half-broken off, the other's meshes marr'd,
And there were bruises which no eye could see
Saving a Hamadryad's.

The use of the word "expanded" in speaking of the draught-board may puzzle you; but the Western draught-board is commonly made so as to open and shut like a book, —indeed, it used to be the fashion to make these boards resemble when closed two large volumes bound in leather. The word "meshes," referring to the wing of the bee, signifies of course the reticulations of the wing, scientifically called "nervures."

And now for the close, which is very briefly told. The youth heard the hamadryad utter a cry of pain; and he ran at once into the forest:

No bark was on the tree, no leaf was green,
The trunk was riven through. From that day forth
Nor word nor whisper sooth'd his ear, nor sound
Even of insect wing; but loud laments
The woodmen and the shepherds one long year
Heard day and night; for Rhaicos would not quit
The solitary place, but moan'd and died.
Hence milk and honey wonder not, O guest,
To find set duly on the hollow stone.

The last lines refer to the Greek custom, so often described by Theocritus, of placing offerings of milk and honey before the places supposed to be haunted by a woodland divinity. In spite of some little modern touches, the whole conception of the story by Landor is quite Greek in

its way,—and especially in its tenderness. If you will take the trouble some day to study the legend, you will easily see that it is one of those stories which never can grow old, and which neither Landor nor Lowell could exhaust. There is a strange vitality about Greek stories. A thousand different poets may take up the same Greek story century after century and write about it; yet the thing remains as fresh as ever, inviting still greater genius to do it justice. Some future Japanese poet might certainly find in the substance of this story the inspiration for a very pretty romance containing a very deep moral.

CHAPTER XIX

SOME ENGLISH TREE POETRY

A COUPLE of years ago I was requested by some of the students attending this class to give a lecture on the subject of trees in English poetry. An opportunity has now come to attempt something of that kind; but I am afraid that it will not be a very successful effort. The request inspired me to make researches that I should not otherwise have thought of making; and I was rather surprised at the results. One of these was the discovery that English poets have given very little attention to the subject of trees. The Japanese word for tree and for plant does not seem to be very different; perhaps when I was requested to give a lecture on tree poetry it was not intended really that I should limit the lecture to the subject of trees only—leaving plants out of the question. However I took the word literally; and did confine my searching to the subject of trees—big trees; and I am very glad for doing so, because I learned that there is very little about trees in English poetry. Nor is that all. I think we may say that the amount of poetry on this subject in almost any European literature is rather small.

What is the reason? I am not sure of the reason; I will not venture any opinion about it—except to say that I think we should have to go back to Greek and Roman civilization in order to find the real cause. Anyhow Western poets have chiefly turned their attention to flowers and plants, rather than trees. You will find thousands of poems about roses and lilies, and violets and daisies, and garden plants of many kinds. But you will not find much poetry about big trees—except in scattered lines, or occasional stanzas in long poems treating of other subjects. Perhaps you

will ask how we can draw a line between plants and trees —in relation to classification of poetry. I think the best answer to that sensible question would be this:—Let us consider, as trees, only those growths which contain wood in the stem. By so doing we can easily establish a line between the poetry of plants and the poetry of trees.

Usually when English poets make poems about trees they celebrate the trees on account of some historic or romantic association. For instance there is Tennyson's poem about the famous oak. There is very little about the beauty and power of the tree in itself, but a great deal about things that happened, while the tree was still alive. Tennyson is not alone in this respect. Other English poets have restricted their attention to trees in just the same way. Perhaps one reason may be that very few English trees are remarkable for the beauty of their flowers; and it is the flower especially that attracts the European poet. We have no cherry trees, for example, in England like the cherry trees of Japan. The most beautiful of the blossoming trees in England is perhaps the apple tree; an apple tree in full bloom would be quite as beautiful as the Japanese cherry tree, if the flowers opened before the leaves began to bud. The extraordinary beauty of Japanese cherry trees in blossom is chiefly owing to the fact that, in the majority of species, the blossoms appear before the leaves—so that the whole tree becomes like one great blossom, or white and pink clouds of blossoms. Nevertheless English apple trees and other fruit trees in bloom are very fine: why are they not written about? Well, such trees are usually to be seen only on fruit farms or in private gardens—not in situations that help to make a landscape beautiful. Perhaps the most celebrated English flowering tree is the hawthorn; and this is often praised by poets because it happens to be placed in lanes and on public roads, much after the fashion of the Japanese cherry tree. Still any complete poems addressed to such flowering trees are not easy to find.

I should not like you to think that cherry flowers are

totally unknown to English poets; but it is a curious fact that the only noteworthy poem which I have been able to find touching a cherry tree is a poem about a wild cherry tree and it is by George Meredith. If he had only seen the garden cherry trees, I do not think that he would have written much about them. But a wild cherry blossoming alone in the wood is a beautiful sight. And this poem has celebrated it in wonderful verse. Also it is very curious how he came to write about a wild cherry tree. The poem is about a man who has suffered great sorrow in consequence of the death of the mother of his children: he is almost in despair, ready to doubt all things. But unexpectedly one morning he sees in blossom a wild cherry tree at which he and she used to look with joy in other and happier times. Thinking about the beautiful tree and its blossoms leads him to a happier and better frame of mind. The poem is called "A Faith on Trial."

Now gazed I where, sole upon gloom,
As flower-bush in sun-specked crag,
Up the spine of the double combe
With yew-boughs heavily cloaked,
A young apparition shone:
Known, yet wonderful, white
Surpassingly; doubtfully known,
For it struck as the birth of Light:
Even Day from the dark unyoked.
It waved like a pilgrim flag
O'er processional penitents flown
When of old they broke rounding yon spine:
O the pure wild-cherry in bloom!

* * * *

The forest's white virgin;
She, the white wild cherry, a tree,
Earth-rooted, tangibly wood,
Yet a presence throbbing alive;
Nor she in our language dumb:
A spirit born of a tree;
Because earth-rooted alive.

This is the kind of verse justly called obscure,—and it reminds us very much of Browning's obscurity in his worst moments. But when we take the trouble to analyse either Browning or Meredith, in their difficult utterances, we generally get at beauty of some kind. And there is beauty here. You must understand that the poet is walking up a mountain path, with a great wood of yew trees before him on either side—such trees have a very dark foliage. And all at once at a turn of the path, he catches sight of a wild cherry tree in blossom—seeming astonishingly white against the almost black green foliage of the yews. Now we can paraphrase.

"Now I looked and saw, alone in the gloom—as one might see a brightly flowering plant in some place of dark rocks, illuminated by a single ray of sunshine—something very beautiful. I was looking up the ridge of a forked hill, which was all covered with dark yew trees; and against their darkness I saw the shining apparition,—like a beautiful luminous spirit. I knew the tree, indeed. I had seen it before; but now it seemed to me more wonderful than ever, more white, and almost like a newly discovered thing. It amazed me like a sudden creation of light in darkness,—like the separation of day from night might surprise the eyes of those angels who were present when God said, 'Let there be light.' It was like a white pilgrim flag above those dark yew trees,—above the endless procession of their sable shapes. In ancient times there actually were religious processions upon that hill; and they used to pass around the ridge of the hill, all robed in black, carrying banners above them. But no banner was more beautiful or more white than the beautiful wild cherry tree there upon the hill. And that white virgin of the forest, though only a tree rooted in the earth, and merely wood to the touch, was nevertheless most truly a living thing,—a shape all quivering with life. Only a tree—yet more than a tree to the eyes that can see, and to the heart that can feel: a spirit indeed, and not dumb, but able to speak to us in the language of souls, notwith-

standing the fact of being rooted in the ground."

That is the meaning of the description, and you can imagine the nature of the meditation which follows. To the dreaming poet, that beautiful blossoming tree becomes an image of life. All life that we know issues from the earth —is, so to speak, related to clay—that is, either the beginning or the end of life is there. And just as, out of the common black clay, issues the tree that bears those beauteous flowers of purest white, so it may be that man, in spite of his apparent beginning on earth, may evolve some divine blossom of the spirit.

So you see that even in Western poetry, some beautiful thoughts have been suggested by the cherry tree. Meredith has written a great deal about the woods and trees: he is a great nature poet;—and the most famous of his philosophical poems, "The Woods of Westermain" is a description of human life under the simile of a haunted forest. I am not going to quote from it, because it does not exactly belong to the subject of this lecture; but I may quote to you a little poem of Meredith's about pine woods,—or rather about the thoughts which come to a poet while walking under the pines. It is called "Dirge in Woods."

A wind sways the pines,
And below
Not a breath of wild air;
Still as the mosses that glow
On the flooring and over the lines
Of the roots here and there.
The pine-tree drops its dead;
They are quiet, as under the sea.
Overhead, overhead
Rushes life in a race,
As the clouds the clouds chase;
And we go,
And we drop like the fruits of the tree,
Even we,
Even so.

Briefly paraphrased:—

"High up the pine-trees are rocking in the wind: but down below, among the great trunks, everything is quiet;—there are only dead leaves, and roots of trees and mosses crawling over the roots;—and here, into the dusk and silence, the pine-tree drops its dead leaves. All dead things that fall here, fall into a quiet like that of the bottom of the deep sea. But high up everything is alive and rushing,—birds are singing and flying; branches are bending and swaying; and, still higher up in the sky the clouds are running before the wind.

"Life is like this pine wood,—human life. On the surface all is motion and change; but under the surface is stillness and death."

This seems an abrupt ending. It is intentionally abrupt. The poet does not think it necessary to remind us that it is out of death that all life grows,—just as, in the dark depths of the pine forest, it is out of the dust and decay of old trees and fallen leaves, and the clay of them, that the young trees grow.

Somebody especially asked me for a poem about maple trees. There are some, but scarcely any in English literature proper,—for in England the maple tree is not of the same kind as we have here; and you do not see the beautiful crimsons that make a Japanese maple wood one of the charming sights of autumn. It is rather the tendency of English foliage to become yellowish in autumn. I think you have seen a reference to this in Tennyson. But in America the maple trees become beautifully red in autumn; and American poets have written many things about them. Indeed in some parts of America and Canada the colours of autumn give extraordinary splendor to the forests. The American poet Lowell has a number of poems on trees, and among these I find two compositions on maples. One is a love poem; the other a meditative poem. And I shall quote the latter first—at least the best part of it.

THE MAPLE

The Maple puts her corals on in May,
While loitering frosts about the lowlands cling,
To be in tune with what the robins sing,
Plastering new log-huts 'mid her branches gray;
But when the Autumn southward turns away,
Then in her veins burns most the blood of Spring,
And every leaf, intensely blossoming,
Makes the year's sunset pale the set of day.

In the month of May the maple tree first puts forth her coral pink buds, while the long lingeri ng frosts of the season still makes the lowlands cold in the early morning. The tree seems anxious to share the joy of the season—that joy of life which expresses itself in the singing of the robins, as they make their little nests in the gray branches of the great tree,—nests plastered and made of little twigs, with the bark left upon them, so that they look like tiny huts. The tree is beautiful in spring; but that is not the time when it is most beautiful or most wonderful. It is in the latter part of autumn, when the cold season is approaching. Then the leaves of the maple become so splendidly red, that their autumn colour is even more beautiful to see than the red glow of sunset itself.

FANCY

UNDER THE OCTOBER MAPLES

What mean these banners spread,
These paths with royal red
So gaily carpeted?
Comes there a prince to-day?
Such footing were too fine
For feet less argentine
Than Dian's own or thine,
Queen whom my tides obey.

Surely for thee are meant
These hues so orient
That with a sultan's tent

Each tree invites the sun;
Our Earth such homage pays,
So decks her dusty ways,
And keeps such holidays,
For me, and only one.

My brain shapes form and face,
Throbs with the rhythmic grace
And cadence of her pace
To all fine instincts true;
Her footsteps, as they pass,
Than moonbeams over grass
Fall lighter,—but, alas,
More insubstantial too!

The poet asks, as he looks at the maple forest in its fervid splendor, "What is the signification of all this magnificent colour? Red leaves cover the ground like a red carpet; and the foliage overhead is like some splendid awning. It is as though the forest has been decorating itself to receive a visit from somebody. But who can that somebody be? Such 'footing'—i.e. such a carpeting—is too fine for any feet less silver-white than the feet of the moon or the feet of the ideal woman who influences the poet's life even as the moon moves the tides of the sea."

"Surely," he says, "only for her can be meant this glorious display of Oriental colour—where each tree seems to invite the visit of the sun, as by offering him the crimson tent of a Sultan for a resting place."

Imagination shapes for him the form and the face of the one person most worthy to enjoy the spectacle; perhaps memory enables him to hear even the musical step of her approach. But really these steps can make no sound in this world, any more than one can hear the falling of moonlight upon grass. Why?—we are not exactly told. Possibly the poet is referring to the dead woman about whom he has elsewhere written so many beautiful things. I imagine that this is the case, and that he is only trying to say to her: "How happy you would be if you could see these maples now

as I see them! and perhaps you do—but, alas! I cannot hear or see you now, because you no longer have a body!"

Lowell has also some long poems on oak trees and pine trees. The poems upon oak trees are not very remarkable: the stanzas were written when the poet was quite young,—besides, we need not go to American poets for poetry about oak trees. You can find much better poetry on the same subject in Tennyson. But his poem upon the pine tree, the gigantic pine tree of the American mountain slopes, is full of fine lines; and an Englishman could scarcely see anything resembling such pine trees in his own country. I shall quote a few stanzas.

TO A PINE-TREE

Far up on Katahdin thou towerest,
  Purple-blue with the distance and vast;
Like a cloud o'er the lowlands thou lowerest,
  That hangs poised on a lull in the blast,
    To its fall leaning awful.

In the storm, like a prophet o'er-maddened,
  Thou singest and tossest thy branches;
Thy heart with the terror is gladdened,
  Thou forebodest the dread avalanches,
    When whole mountains swoop vale-ward.

In the calm thou o'erstretchest the valleys
  With thine arms, as if blessings imploring,
Like an old king led forth from his palace,
  When his people to battle are pouring
    From the city beneath him.

* * *

Spite of winter, thou keep'st thy green glory,
  Lusty father of Titans past number!
The snow-flakes alone make thee hoary,
  Nestling close to thy branches in slumber,
    And thee mantling with silence.

The last stanza is the best; and the last line of that stanza is best of all. The idea of snow falling upon evergreen trees, with the result of making them more beautiful,

has often been expressed by poets; but the description of snow as wrapping trees in silence, will probably be new to some of you. It is as true as it is beautiful. Snow makes silence; and the poet is justified in speaking of a snow-covered pine as wrapped in a mantle of silence. In England, except in conservatories, and private gardens, you are not likely to see pine trees resembling either the great American pines or the Japanese pines. (When I say American pines, I mean the pines of the north; for the pines of the southern states, such as Georgia, are very different trees indeed, rising up straight as the masts of a ship.) English wild evergreens are better represented by such coniferous trees as firs, which, though related to the pine, form a very distinct variety. So English poets have little to say about what we call pines in Japan or in America; and when English poets do happen to celebrate pine trees—as Milton did, in describing the spear of the Archangel—the reference has been to the pine of Norway:—

> His spear, to equal which the tallest pine
> Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast
> Of some great ammiral, were but a wand. *

And when Browning wrote his fine line describing the pine trees "like black priests climbing the hill," † he was speaking of European, but not of English pines. Fir trees, on the other hand, are often mentioned; and everybody should know the pretty verses by the poet Hood about the fir trees in the garden of the house in which he lived when a child:—

> I remember, I remember
> The fir trees dark and high;
> I used to think their slender tops
> Were close against the sky:
> It was a childish ignorance,
> But now 'tis little joy
> To know I'm farther off from heav'n
> Than when I was a boy.

A child, looking at very high trees against the blue sky,

* *Paradise Lost*, I, 292-4. † *The Flight of the Dutchess*, 14-20

is apt to think that the trees reach very nearly to the sky—almost touching; for the appearance of the sky above is very real to childish senses. I think you have often heard little children asking whether one could not reach the sky by climbing up a hill or getting on top of a very high roof. The man knows that the sky is only an appearance; but he is not on that account any happier than the child who thinks that God's heaven is very close to him.

From the subject of pine trees we may momentarily turn to that of willow trees. There are many poems about willow trees, and I suppose you remember how frequently the willow, as an emblem of melancholy, is mentioned in the songs and plays of Shakespeare. The melancholy willow is the ghostly willow of Japan,—in England called the "weeping willow." But all willow trees are not weeping willows: there are many kinds and some of them grow tall and sturdy as any pine. I want to quote to you a very light poem upon the subject: it is an imitation only of Wordsworth; even the title of it is "An Imitation of Wordsworth." Wordsworth was at one time imitated in a great number of ways—sometimes mockingly, sometimes ironically, sometimes in the way of cruel parody. But this imitation is good poetry, and is worth quoting, at least part of it. It is a parody, if you like, but so gentle a parody that it takes the character of original composition:—

There is a river clear and fair,
  'Tis neither broad nor narrow;
It winds a little here and there—
It winds about like any hare;
And then it takes as straight a course
As on the turnpike road a horse,
  Or through the air an arrow.

The trees that grow upon the shore,
  Have grown a hundred years or more;
So long there is no knowing.
Old Daniel Dobson does not know

When first these trees began to grow;
And still they grew, and grew, and grew,
As if they'd nothing to do,
  But ever to be growing.

The impulses of air and sky
Have rear'd their stately heads so high,
  And closed their boughs with green;
Their leaves the dews of evening quaff,—
  And when the wind blows loud and keen,
I've seen the jolly timbers laugh,
  And shakes their sides with merry glee—
  Wagging their heads in mockery.

Fix'd are their feet in solid earth,
  Where winds can never blow;
But visitings of deeper birth
  Have reach'd their roots below.
For they have gain'd the river's brink,
And of the living water's drink.

There's little Will, a five years child—
  He is my youngest boy;
To look on eyes so fair and wild,
  It is a very joy:—
He hath conversed with sun and shower,
And dwelt with every idle flower,
  As fresh and gay as them.
He loiters with the briar rose,—
The blue-bells are his play-fellows,
  That dance upon their slender stem.

And I have said, my little Will,
Why should he not continue still
  A thing of Nature's rearing?
A thing beyond the world's control—
A living vegetable soul,—
  No human sorrow fearing.

It were a blessed sight to see
That child become a Willow-tree,
  His brother trees among.
He'd be four times as tall as me,
  And live three times as long.

This mixture of playfulness and serious suggestion could only have been made by a person who comprehended Wordsworth's method and feeling very well indeed.* It is a little masterpiece of parody; but in spite of the fun there is really a touching suggestion in it: namely, the idea which comes to every parent at times when he thinks about the sorrows of life which his children will have to endure. Also, the composition reminds us of the fact that the comparison between the unconscious life of the tree and the conscious life of man has been made at many times by great religious writers. Just for a moment we have the hint of a sad fancy, —of the question whether the life of the tree is not really a more fortunate condition than the life of a human being. And then this fancy ends with a laugh,—turns off in a burst of merriment. This wrapping about of a serious idea with humour is what makes the quality of "society verse;" and the little parody is an excellent example of society verse in one form.

But now let us look at a more serious poem on the subject of the willow tree. The author is Miss Rossetti; and the quality of the poem is very fine. The whole is a little too long to quote; but we shall read the best of it. The title is "In the Willow Shade."

I sat beneath a willow tree,
  Where water falls and calls;
While fancies upon fancies solaced me,
  Some true, and some were false.
* * *
All things are vain that wax and wane,
  For which we waste our breath;
Love only doth not wane and is not vain,
  Love only outlives death.

A singing lark rose toward the sky,
  Circling he sang amain;
He sang, a speck scarce visible sky-high,
  And then he sang again.
* * *

* *The author is Catherine M. Fanshawe*

A hovering melody of birds
  Haunted the air above;
They clearly sang contentment without words,
  And youth and joy and love.

O silvery weeping willow tree
  With all leaves shivering,
Have you no purpose but to shadow me
  Beside this rippled spring?

On this first fleeting day of Spring,
  For Winter is gone by,
And every bird on every quivering wing
  Floats in a sunny sky.

* * *

Have you no purpose in the world
  But thus to shadow me
With all your tender drooping twigs unfurled,
  O weeping willow tree?

* * *

The weeping-willow shook its head
  And stretched its shadow long;
The west grew crimson, the sun smouldered red,
  The birds forbore a song.

Slow wind sighed through the willow leaves,
  The ripple made a moan,
The world drooped murmuring like a thing that grieves;
  And then I felt alone.

I rose to go, and felt the chill,
  And shivered as I went;
Yet shivering wondered, and I wonder still,
  What more that willow meant;

That silvery weeping-willow tree
  With all leaves shivering,
Which spent one long day overshadowing me
  Beside a spring in Spring.

As in Eastern poetry, so in Western poetry also this drooping tree is an emblem of melancholy; and throughout the above-mentioned poem you will observe a certain accord

between the tone of the thoughts uttered and the symbolism itself. The incident is simply this:—a woman, disappointed in love, sits alone under a willow tree, thinking sadly, and asking herself such questions as an unhappy person is likely to ask in moments of doubt and weariness. The world is very beautiful; it is spring; larks are singing; water is laughing; but all this beauty appears to her of no further interest. All she wished for she has lost, and she wonders if existence is worth having, now that she has abandoned that particular hope. And she thinks of the tree above her, whose melancholy drooping almost seems to indicate a sympathy with her sorrow. Yet, no—she thinks, a tree cannot be as we feel;—and yet why is a tree in the world,—for what purpose, only to shadow us?

There is no answer but the sighing of the wind in the branches of the tree. And so the poem abruptly ends. This abrupt ending is really an artistic device. It leaves the imagination unsatisfied, and so leaves the mind also in a melancholy mood. By its suggestion, it provokes an emotion which remains. The same effect is well known to Japanese poets; and the chief interest of this poem ought to lie for you in the resemblance which it offers to certain Japanese methods.

Now before we go to the study of any more long poems I want to quote for you a few short poems about trees. I think you know that the shortest possible form of poetry in English verse is the distich, of two lines only;—the lines may be quite short, or they may be twenty-three or twenty-four syllables in length. But in the next shortest form—the quatrain, there are several poems on trees. These very short poems ought to interest you. Because they come so close to Japanese poetry—not merely in regard to brevity but also in regard to method and feeling. Here are two examples from an American poet,—a very good poet, Aldrich; the first is entitled "Maple Leaves."

> October turned my maple's leaves to gold;
> The most are gone now; here and there one lingers;

Soon these will slip from out the twigs' weak hold,
Like coins between a dying miser's fingers.

Perhaps this would seem to you more appropriate of the English than of the American or the Japanese maple: the characteristic crimson colour is not referred to any more than it is by Tennyson, who also speaks of the "gold" of autumn woods. The colour is less deep; in Japan we have the true crimson, also in some parts of Canada and Western America. But in England and in Eastern America the colour of the leaves is rather orange than crimson. However, you must have noticed that gold coin has also a reddish colour: it is not quite yellow, as the pure gold would be. The alloy used gives the reddish tone; and it is in reference to this tone that all English poets used to speak of "red gold." I do not think that the poem itself needs any interpretation, but I think that you will find the simile very picturesque. Twigs of maple may often bear a curious resemblance to withered fingers; and I need not remind you that in Western story and Western art, the money lover, the miser, is always represented as an old man—because avarice is said to be especially a vice of old age,—the age when the fingers become, if you like, dried up like the twigs of a tree in autumn.

The other poem is about pine trees,—the sound of the wind in the pines. It is entitled "Among the Pines."

Faint murmurs from the pine-tops reach my ear,
As if a harp-string—touched in some far sphere—
Vibrating in the lucid atmosphere,
Let the soft south wind waft its music here.

The suggestion is of a sound of heavenly harps,—as the use of the term "far sphere," meaning far-away world, implies. The rest is simple. The beauty of the verse is in the correctness of the description of sound. The sound of wind in the needles of the pines (what we call the leaves in England) very much resembles the deeper tones of a harp. And I think that you would find the suggestion correct,

even if we substitute an Eastern for a Western musical instrument.

The following quatrain, referring to an elm tree, pictures a mood rather than an object: it is not a bit of imagery. It is rather a bit of psychology, and has no title. The poet is an Englishman, William Watson.

> To be as this old elm full loth were I,
> That shakes in the autumn storm its palsied head.
> Hewn by the weird last woodman let me lie
> Ere the path rustle with my foliage shed.

"The weird last woodman" is Death. The poet has seen a dead or dying tree, trembling in the cold winds of autumn; and it appears to him an emblem of the misery of old age. Better, he thinks, to die young, than to become old and lose the use of one's higher faculties. The old age in which the senses are benumbed and intellect wanders is very well compared to a tree so nearly dead that every Spring it can put forth only two or three new leaves.

The willow tree is not the only melancholy tree of Western folklore and folksong. The cypress and the yew are also trees associated in imagination with melancholy things, and chiefly because of their being planted in cemeteries very often. Nobody could write a joyous poem on the subject of that sombre tree, the cypress tree—that is, in English. It is too often to be seen in grave-yards. But in Persian poetry and Arabic poetry the cypress is often mentioned in a very different way—compared with the grace of a young girl, as in the famous line about a cup-bearer in the stanza from Omar Khayyam:—

> And lose your fingers in the tresses of
> The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.*

English poets have not yet found any such suggestions in the cypress trees of their country. But the yew tree is not altogether a melancholy tree. It is a very dark tree and a

* *Rubaiyat* (Fourth Edition), XLI

very ornamental tree, and perhaps for both reasons is commonly placed in grave-yards. Some of the most celebrated lines in Tennyson describe the tree leaning above the gravestones, extending its branches to them like hands, under the ground finding the dead with its roots:

> Old Yew, which graspest at the stones
> That name the under-lying dead,
> Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
> Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.*

But for other reasons this tree has always interested Englishmen; and it was very extensively planted and cultivated in England during the days of archery. Out of its dense wood the best kind of bows were made; and the trees that furnished English archers with their famous weapon never could be considered an unlucky tree. So, though we find no very remarkable compositions about the cypress, we find a remarkable number of good English verses about the yew tree. Wordsworth wrote several poems about yew trees—elaborate poems; Tennyson had written about yew trees, both in the "Idylls of the King" and in "In Memoriam," and in our own time the best of Watson's poems is a poem upon the yew tree. (Watson is one of the younger poets—one of the very few who have preserved the best traditions of Victorian poetry.) But we cannot quote them all; and I think that the best of poems about yew trees, in a general way, is a poem by Ebenezer Elliot, entitled "The Maltby Yews." I shall quote the whole of this, not because it is the best verse as to mere form (though the form is very good), but chiefly because of the moral thinking with which it ends:—

> Famed Maltby yews, with trunks like stone!
> Are you or these gray rocks the older?
> Like "death-in-life," ye strangely grow,
> And, dead alive, they sternly moulder.

**In Memoriam*, II, 1-4

Memorials grand of death and life,
That seem from time new life to borrow!
Full many a race have ye outlived
Of men whose lives were crime and sorrow.

Age after age, while Time grew old,
Your writhen boughs here slowly lengthened;
Storm-stricken trees! your stormy strength
Five hundred years have darkly strengthened.
Yet safe beneath your mighty roots
The busy bee hath made its dwelling;
And, at your feet, the little mouse,
With lifted hands, its joy is telling.

And high above the full-voiced lark
The sun, that loves to see you, beneath
On lonely rock or mossy trunk,
That with the rock coeval seemeth;
While, all around, the desert flowers,
Where breezes drink their freshness, gather,
As children come to knell and bend
In prayer around their father's father.

O, could I write upon your gloom
A solemn verse that would not perish,
My written thoughts should warn and bless,
And nations saved the precept cherish;
For I would bid the dark and strong
Be greatly good, and daily stronger,
That power to wrong, and will to wrong,
Like fiends divorced, might pair no longer.

The appearance of a grand old yew tree is even more impressive than the sight of an English oak tree. The yew is much more fantastic in form, but equally strong and heavy; and the darkness of its leaves gives it a very solemn appearance. The great trunk is just as gray as stone, and really looks like a mass of rock—as the poet has very well suggested in the first of the above stanzas. The play upon words in the third and fourth lines of that first stanza signifies only this:—the growing of the trees is like the grow-

ing of rock—therefore a ghostly thing, because rocks do not grow. It is like death in life; that is to say, dead things becoming alive. On the other hand, the rocks, although supposed to be quite as animate, in the psychological sense, as wood, are not growing but mouldering; and their decay is quite as grimacing to see as the growth of those grim trees. Now the poet thinks of the vast time required for the production of such enormous trees; and he remembers that during that time many generations of men, good and bad, must have passed away. The word "race" in the seventh line of the first stanza must be understood as meaning generation—not race in the ordinary sense of the word.

But while he admires, with awe, the old majesty and strength of these trees, he notices how many little things they shelter and make happy,—flowers, birds, bees, and field-mice. And this suggested to him an abstract image of terrible power exerted only for a good end; and he thinks what a pleasant world this world would indeed become if power were only given to good men. That is the suggestion which the yew tree offers him.

You may observe that the word "dark" is used throughout this poem in a somewhat rare meaning. Of course the foliage of the tree is dark; and the poet correctly describes it. But he is also using the adjective in another meaning,—namely that of the suggestion of darkness, which is fear. In the fifth line of the last stanza, especially, the words "dark and strong" means terrible and strong, terrible in the meaning of having power to make afraid. So the wish of the poet is that those who have the force of will to inspire fear, and the power to make themselves obeyed, should be always good, and therefore the rulers of men. If all goodness were on the side of strength, and all evil on the side of weakness only, then the world would soon become morally perfect.

In speaking of pines, I told you that when English poets describe pines they are rarely speaking of English trees—more usually of Norwegian, Italian, or other European trees.

Pines of the peculiar forms—irregular and fantastic forms —that we see in Japan, do not belong to English landscapes. To my thinking, the most remarkable feature of the Japanese pine is the root. Often stretching to a considerable distance from the tree above the ground, and coiling like a dragon on the face of a cliff, piercing soil and rock, and hanging down like serpents,—these pine roots have a grotesqueness, or rather a suggestion of grotesque life, that must delight the eye of any artist. Shelley has noticed this characteristic in pines, not in England, but in Italy; and he describes the trunks of the trees as "tortured" into strange shapes by the storms that pass over them.* This description, is, however, represented only by a line or two. What most nearly corresponds to the picturesqueness of the pine in England is the picturesqueness of the yew tree. Here is a bit of description from Wordsworth, which will certainly seem to you like a description of certain Japanese groves that you have been in:—

> Huge trunks! and each particular trunk a growth
> Of intertwisted fibres serpentine
> Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved;
> Nor uninformed with Phantasy, and looks
> That threaten the profane; a pillared shade,
> Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue,
> By sheddings from the pining umbrage tinged
> Perennially—beneath whose sable roof
> Of boughs, as if for festal purpose decked
> With unrejoicing berries - ghostly Shapes
> May meet at noontide; Fear and trembling Hope,
> Silence and Foresight; Death the Skeleton
> And Time the Shadow. †

This is from a description of the yew-trees at Lorton Vale. I believe that you will be able to perceive that the

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* We paused amid the pines that stood
The giants of waste,
Tortured by storms to shapes as rude
As serpents interlaced. ——Shelley: *To Jane*, ll. 21-4

† *Yew-trees*, ll. 16 ff.

style of description is very much in the manner of Milton, and that some lines in it almost seem to have been taken directly from Milton—though such is not the case. The effect is caused by the use of Latin words which were favourites with Milton, and which you will find seldom used by anyone else. But Wordsworth does not use them in quite the same way. The curious adverb "inveterately" in the sense of enduring, you will also have found used by Tennyson; it occurs in the idylls of "Gareth and Lynette," in the description of the carvings upon the gate of Camelot. "Convolved," meaning "twisted together" or "intertwisted," is quite a Miltonian word, and the same thing might be said of "uninformed" in the meaning of "not inspired with," or "not permeated by." Among other words,—not particularly quaint, but perhaps unfamiliar, I would call your attention to "sheddings." We say of a tree, whose leaves are falling, that it sheds its leaves—just as we might say of any insect that it sheds its skin. Only in one case the shedding is a throwing down and in the other case a throwing off. Used as a noun, shedding means a dropping or a thing dropped. The word "unrejoicing" as applied to berries ought to remind you that we use the word "gay" in speaking of colours. A gay colour—literally you would translate, I think, *yukai*, signifying a bright colour, a strong clear colour. "Unrejoicing" might be poetically understood in the reverse sense when we apply it to colour—not gay, therefore gloomy. I think that you have occasionally met with such expressions as "gloomy colour" in English books.

Now for a poem about an oak tree. You know that Tennyson wrote a very famous poem about an oak tree ("The Talking Oak")—making the tree tell its own story. Most of the English poems about oak trees deal much with the same subject in one or another form: the age of the tree,—the idea of the multitude of things that happened during the long life of the tree. Next to that poem of Tennyson, I think, the best composition on the subject is a poem by Frederick Locker on an historic oak of which the death oc-

curred in his time.

THE OLD OAK-TREE AT HATFIELD BROADOAK

A mighty growth! The countyside
Lamented when the giant died,
  For England loves her trees:
What misty legends round him cling!
How lavishly he once did fling
  His acorns to the breeze!

To strike a thousand roots in fame,
To give the district half its name,
  The fiat could not hinder;
Last spring he put forth one green bough,—
The red leaves hang there still,—but now
  His very props are tinder.

Elate, the thunderbolt he braved;
Long centuries his branches waved
  A welcome to the blast:
An oak of broadest girth he grew,
And woodman never dared to do
  What time has done at last.

From this point the story of the tree is related in a series of beautiful stanzas—a little too long to quote entirely. I shall only cite a few—

And it were hard to fix the tale
Of when he first peered forth a frail
  Petitioner for dew;
He took no ill from Saxon spade,
The rabbit spared the tender blade,
  And valiantly he grew,

And showed some inches from the ground
When Saint Augustine came and found
  Us very proper Vandals;
When nymphs owned bluer eyes than hose,
When England measured men by blows,
  And measured time by candles.

That is to say, "It would be very hard to say exactly when this oak tree first began to grow—first showed some tender leaves above the ground. But it must have been long before the time of the Norman Conquest, probably in old Saxon times, the times of King Alfred, or even perhaps before that—in the days when Saxons were still mostly pagans, and when Augustine came to preach Christianity." "Vandals," the name of a fierce Northern tribe, is often used in the sense of barbarians; and that is the meaning here attached to it by the poet. But the handsome young women of those times, though perhaps barbarous, had very blue eyes,—more blue than blue stockings. "Hose" is another word for stockings; and the poet is punning here, for the word "bluestocking" means an overlearned, pedantic woman. And in those days the value of a man was estimated by his power to strike; and time was measured or estimated not by clocks or watches, but by the burning of candles. You will remember, no doubt, how King Alfred is said to have kept his time by burning candles, which were marked off into portions representing the duration of an hour or thereabouts.

Worn pilgrims blessed his grateful shade
Ere Richard led the first crusade,
  And maidens led the dance
Where, boy and man, in summer time,
Sweet Chaucer pondered o'er his rhyme;
  And Robin Hood, perchance,

Stole hither to Maid Marian
(And if they did not come, one can
  At any rate suppose it);
They met beneath the mistletoe,—
We did the same, and ought to know
  The reason why they chose it.

The reference to Robin Hood and Maid Marian, ought to be familiar to everybody who loves the old English ballads. Marian was the name of the sweetheart of a famous outlaw

and archer; and the poet tells us that they probably met under the oak-tree because the mistletoe grew upon that tree. This is the same thing as saying that they met to kiss each other. You know that the mistletoe is a parasitic plant, very pretty, which grows particularly upon oaks; and in ancient times it was considered a sacred plant by the Druids. In these times it is still used to decorate English homes at the time of Christmas and the New Year. Now at that season, when it is suspended from the ceiling of rooms, there is a game often played by young people—boys and girls, or young men and young women—a kind of forfeit game. If, during the game you can cause a girl, either by forgetfulness, or otherwise, to stand under the mistletoe, you have a right to kiss her.

> And this was called the traitors' branch,—
> Stern Warwick hung six yeomen stanch
> Along its mighty fork;
> Uncivil wars for them! The fair
> Red rose and white still bloom,—but where
> Are Lancaster and York?

I think you remember that in the wars of Lancaster and York—representing in English history very much what is represented in Japanese history by the long struggle between the Taira and Minamoto clans—the emblem of the Lancaster side was a red rose, and that of York a white rose. Looking at the oak tree, the poet remembers one fact of that great contest; namely, that six yeomen, or freeholders, were hung to one of the branches; and he observes that although the white rose and the red rose can still be seen blossoming in the neighbourhood, the dynasties which once chose them for symbols have for ever passed away.

After this we have references to the reigns of King Henry VIII. and of Elizabeth,—of Charles II. and of William,—of the Georges, and at last of the days of Napoleon and Waterloo. The battle of Waterloo was fought, as you know, in the year 1815; and by that time the tree was nearly dead:—

His few remaining boughs were green,
And dappled sunbeams danced between,
  Upon the dappled deer,
When, clad in black, a pair were met
To read the Waterloo Gazette,—
  They mourned their darling here.

They joined their boy. The tree at last
Lies prone,—discoursing of the past,
  Some fancy-dreams awaking.
Resigned, though headlong changes come,
Though nations arm to tuck of drum,
  And dynasties are quaking.

The name Waterloo Gazette is, of course, the fancy name of a newspaper; and it suggests to us at once the nature of the news which those two parents, dressed in mourning black, are reading under the tree. Their boy has been killed in the great battle with Napoleon. But remember that the name Waterloo would come in quite correctly here even as the name of a modern English newspaper, for there is now a part of London so named. The expression, "They joined their boy," means they also died. And at last the tree dies utterly and falls, after a life of nearly two thousand years. It had been carefully propped up; but in spite of the props it rotted at last and it fell. Nothing remains of it now but the name of the place, Broadoak,—a very pretty English village. And because of the tree, the memories of it, the poet cries out in conclusion:

Romantic spot! By honest pride
Of eld tradition sanctified;
  My pensive vigil keeping,
I feel thy beauty like a spell,
And thoughts, and tender thoughts, upwell,
  That fill my heart to weeping.

Looking and meditating, the poet says, this place is indeed a place of which its inhabitants may justly be proud, remembering its thousand traditions. And these traditions,

interesting or terrible, are no doubt worthy of all reverential record. But, after everything is said, it is not the tradition of the place that makes the charm, but the beauty of it. When one beholds that beauty, the great green peace of the summer all about, and the silent blossoming of the flowers, the sudden contrast between those memories of blood and this happy quiet brings a shock of emotion. In this way it often happens that our knowledge of history may greatly enhance the emotional charm of a place.

Now for some small bits of poetry about trees,—from Herrick. I lectured before about Herrick;* you know that he was a very curious and happy country clergyman, who wrote hundreds and hundreds of very short poems (as well as longer ones) about every imaginable subject—flowers and girls, earth and skies, lips and wines, love and dancing. If you want a poem on almost any subject, you can find that in Herrick. Some of his work is of course silly; but some is very pretty and famous. Almost every kind of flower known to English gardeners has been sung of by him. This is not a lecture upon the poetry of flowers and plants; there will be no time this term for that subject. But in regard to flowering trees, we may speak to-day and I shall quote a little song about tree blossoms from Herrick, which is almost like a Japanese poem in tone,—though not in form.

TO BLOSSOMS

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
Why do ye fall so fast?
Your date is not so past
But you may stay yet here a while
To blush and gently smile,
And go at last.

What! were ye born to be
An hour or half's delight,
And so to bid good-night?

* *On Poets*, pp. 406-26, *Notes on Herrick*

'Twas pity Nature brought ye forth
Merely to show your worth
And lose you quite.

But you are lovely leaves, where we
May read how soon things have
Their end, though ne'er so brave:
And after they have shown their pride
Like you a while, they glide
Into the grave.

You know that Herrick belongs to the seventeenth century, having been born in the latter part of the sixteenth century, 1591. Compared with the best Japanese poetry even Herrick is quite modern in time;—but is it not curious that these verses of his so much resemble in feeling and thought some of the old Japanese poems? Observe also that these verses are quite as true of Japanese cherry or plum blossoms as of English blossoms. The name of no tree is mentioned, nor is any description given; the poem is only a mirroring of the emotion caught by the sight of falling blossoms. And further, how much simplicity is here, notwithstanding the beauty. There are very few words of two syllables; monosyllables are mostly used; yet the music is perfect. Also the English has scarcely changed in those hundreds of years—so pure is the choice of language. There is only the word "brave" at the end of the third line of the third stanza, which has changed a little. It used to mean what we now express by the adjective "fine," "handsome" or "showy." And you can give it the double meaning here, without any harm.

Herrick has poems upon the laurel tree, the cherry tree, and the willow tree,—but none of these are quite so well done as the poem just quoted. In fact the verses on the cherry blossom are rather disappointing for want of another conclusion. However, let us examine the meaning of it. It is numbered 198, in his "Hesperides."

TO CHERRY-BLOSSOMS

You 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?

Perhaps it looks simpler than it is. Herrick is reminded of the grace and beauty of young girls by the sight of the cherry-blossoms—and addresses them as young girls (you know the cherry tree is cultivated only for its fruit in England). And he suggests that as the fruit takes the place of the flower we must not too much regret the flower. The mother may not charm our eyes so much as the young girl does: but she has children,—and these are worth more than the beauty and the grace which may have been lost.

Of the laurel tree he writes only in relation to its mortuary usage. No monument above the dead could be, he cries, half so beautiful or enduring as a laurel tree.

TO LAURELS

A funeral stone,
Or verse I covet none,
But only crave
Of you that I may have
A sacred laurel springing from my grave:
Which being seen,
Blest with perpetual green,
May grow to be
Not so much call'd a tree
As the eternal monument of me.

The perpetual green, you will understand to mean evergreen; evergreen trees being particularly selected to plant above graves. But there is another meaning in this poem. The laurel was especially used by the Greeks and the Romans to furnish those wreaths with which the heroes and poets were crowned; and you know that the term Poet

Laureate hints of this old custom. Herrick is not merely asking for a tree over his grave: he is praying for poetical immortality.

Now I will quote you his little poem about the willow tree, not so much because it is beautiful poetry, but because it contains a great deal of folk-lore, or folk-lore suggestion, in regard to the melancholy signification of the tree:

TO THE WILLOW-TREE

Thou art to all lost love the best,
  The only true plant found,
Wherewith young men and maids distress'd,
  And left of love, are crown'd.

When once the lover's rose is dead,
  Or laid aside forlorn:
Then willow-garlands 'bout the head
  Bedew'd with tears are worn.

When with neglect, the lovers' bane,
  Poor maids rewarded be,
For their love lost, their only gain
  Is but a wreath from thee.

And underneath thy cooling shade,
  When weary of the light,
The love-spent youth and love-sick maid
  Come to weep out the night.

This little bit of early seventeenth century sentimentality must not be taken too literally. It would not be even natural to suppose that very unhappy persons put willow leaves on their heads, or thought it their duty to sit down and cry under a willow tree. But in the ideas of the time the willow tree was associated with unhappy love; and artists even at a much later day used to represent unhappy lovers crowned with willow leaves. Also in the case of a girl who died of grief at being deserted by her lover, willow leaves were sometimes wreathed about the hair of the corpse. Symbolically the poem has a certain value, as recording

these things,—to which you will find references in Shakespeare also.

A few words about poems on foreign trees. You will find many English poems with reference to palm-trees, which, of course, grow only in the tropics. There is one by Whittier; there are some by various travellers. But none of these rise into the first rank of poetry; and none of them compare with the famous little poem in German by Heine,—which poem I think you know: for it has been translated into almost every language. The substance of it is only this—"Upon a snow-covered mountain in the far North stands a pine-tree all alone; and it dreams of a palm-tree far away, all alone in the burning desert." That is all the thought in the poem: but it is a thought which has touched tens of thousands of minds,—so well does it suggest the vanity and the sadness of longing. It has also inspired many writers. Perhaps the most noteworthy inspiration derived from it is the poem by Gautier on the obelisks of Paris and of Luxor. The poem is called "Nostalgies d'obélisques," or "Homesick Longings of Obelisks." I think you have seen pictures of the Egyptian obelisks, very tall, narrow, pointed stones set upright and covered with inscriptions. The French took away from Egypt one of these and set it up in Paris. The poet represents the other, which had been left in Egypt, longing to be with its brother at Paris, where so many wonderful things are to be seen. But the Paris obelisk is equally homesick in the great cold city, and longs for the bright sun and the snowless winter of Egypt. It is a much finer poem than Heine's poem; but it was inspired by Heine; and the thought is exactly the same.

About Indian trees we might expect to find many English poems,—so long have the English been writing books about their colonies. But with the exception of a poem by Kingsley, which I quoted in a former lecture,* "The Mango-Tree," which is really the touching story of an English soldier's wife,—and a few indifferent poems about the banian-

* His lecture on *Charles Kingsley as Poet* ("On Poetry," Chapter XXX)

tree—there is very little to be found. A charming Hindoo girl, named Toru Dutt, who at the age of sixteen had so perfectly mastered four European languages that she could write poetry in any one of them—and very good poetry—attempted some English verses about Indian trees: but they are not really so much descriptions of trees as expressions of love for India. Had she lived a few years longer, she would have probably been a great poet; but she died quite young.

In America, of course, there are very strange trees in the regions bordering the tropics; and we might expect American poets to have given them much attention. Unfortunately these States in which the wonderful vegetation exists—such as Florida, Louisiana,—have not produced poets of any mark, and the only reference to the wonders of the southern forests worth mentioning is by Longfellow, who never even saw what he described. But he describes well. As I have seen these forests, and as they are very strange, let me try to tell you something about them. They are what is called swamp forests; and I believe that there is nothing like them in any other part of the world. When you go much farther south into South America, then you will see extraordinary forests indeed; but these are not at all of the same sort. The swamp forests of Florida are not tropical; but they are the weirdest, the most awful-looking places possible to imagine. The principal trees are the cypress and the water-oak; and mixed with these are immense quantities of palmettos—they resemble palms but never grow more than seventy feet high, and they twist their stems in all directions, so that the stems look like great serpents moving. And of course there are dozens of other kinds of trees. But the general appearance of the swamp forest is not made by the shapes of the trees themselves: it is made by an extraordinary moss, called Spanish moss—really an air plant, or parasite which grows upon the branches of the trees and strangles them. It looks exactly like long white hair; and it covers all the branches—sometimes hanging down fifty feet

or more. Thus all the forest looks as if it was covered with long gray hair; and when you first enter such a forest (in a boat) you are almost afraid, everything looks so ghostly and unnatural. Moreover there are queer birds in these forests, which scream at night in the most horrible way. Longfellow has given a little description of a swamp forest by day, but not of the horrible aspect, so much as of the beautiful; for there is beauty even there. This is what he says of a swamp cypress:—

> Over their heads the towering and tenebrous boughs of the cypress
> Met in a dusky arch, and trailing mosses in mid-air
> Waved like banners that hang on the walls of ancient cathedrals.
> Deathlike the silence seemed, and unbroken, save by the herons
> Home to their roosts in the cedar-trees returning at sunset,
> Or by the owl, as he greeted the moon with demoniac laughter.
> Lovely the moonlight was as it glanced and gleamed on the water,
> Gleamed on the columns of cypress and cedar sustaining the arches,
> Down through whose broken vaults it fell as through chinks in a ruin.
> Dreamlike and indistinct and strange were all things around them.

This is the scenery upon a river, passing through such a swamp forest. Even in the daytime it is somewhat dark there: the trees meet over the water; and the creeping plants hang down and touch you as you sail by. The reference to the owl is in keeping with facts; a particular kind of owl in those forests utters a cry that is just like a horrible laugh. But the true swamp beyond the river is much more dismal.

Here is a little description by another American poet (who was also famous as a novelist—Simms) of a cypress growth

in the swamp, among alligators and other reptiles. It is called "The Edge of the Swmp."

> 'Tis a wild spot, and hath a gloomy look;
> The bird sings never merrily in the trees,
> And the young leaves seem blighted. A rank growth
> Spreads poisonously round, with power to taint
> With blistering dews the thoughtless hand that dares
> To penetrate the covert. Cypresses
> Crowd on the dank, wet earth . . . . .
> . . . . . Wild rugged trees,
> That look like felon spectres,—fetid shrubs,
> That taint the gloomy atmosphere,—dusk shades,
> That gather, half a cloud, and half a fiend
> In aspect, lurking on the swamp's wild edge,—
> Gloom with their sternness and forbidding frowns
> The general prospect . . . . .

This is no exaggeration. Even butterflies and singing birds avoid these swamps. The reference to the plant that blisters the hand that touches them is a simple fact; the plant is commonly known as poisonous vine, and it grows thickly among the cypress trees. Perhaps you will think there is some imaginative exaggeration in the comparison of cypress trees to demons and goblins. But really there is no exaggeration whatever. Covered with the long white moss and taking the strangest shapes, these trees very often assume the shapes which artists give to goblins and evil spirits.

While we are speaking of cypress swamps, I ought to quote to you a little ballad,—a ghost story,—by the poet Moore, about the great lake of the dismal swamp in the Southern States of America, on the Borderland between the States of Virginia and North Carolina. This swamp region is thirty miles long and about ten in breadth; and there is a ghost story about it. Moore visited America and was for some time in Virginia where he heard the story. There was a young man engaged to be married to a girl of the town of Norfolk, not far from the swamp forest. She unex-

pectedly died; and he so much regretted her death that he became insane. In his madness he could not be made to believe that the girl was dead: he said that she had only gone to the swamp, and he would go and find her. At a time when his friends were not watching him, he did go to the swamp; and he was never again seen alive. But it was said that his ghost and the ghost of the girl could be seen rowing a boat through the swamp at night. That is the subject of the ballad; and I think you will like it.

"They made her a grave, too cold and damp,
  For a soul so warm and true;
And she's gone to the Lake of the Dismal Swamp,
Where, all night long, by a fire-fly lamp,
  She paddles her white canoe.

"And her fire-fly lamp I soon shall see,
  And her paddle I soon shall hear;
Long and loving our life shall be,
And I'll hide the maid in a cypress tree
  When the footstep of Death is near!"

Away to the Dismal Swamp he speeds —
  His path was rugged and sore,
Through tangled juniper, beds of reeds,
Through many a fen where the serpent feeds,
  And man never trod before!

And, when on the earth he sunk to sleep,
  If slumber his eyelids knew,
He lay, where the deadly vine doth weep
Its venomous tear and nightly steep
  The flesh with blistering dew!

And near him the she-wolf stirr'd the brake,
  And the copper-snake breathed in his ear,
Till he starting cried, from his dream awake,
' Oh! when shall I see the dusky Lake,
  And the white canoe of my dear?"

He saw the Lake, and a meteor bright
  Quick, over its surface play'd —

"Welcome," he said, "my dear one's light!"
And the dim shore echoed, for many a night,
  The name of the death-cold maid!

Till he hollow'd a boat of the birchen bark,
  Which carried him off from shore;
Far far he follow'd the meteor spark,
The wind was high and the clouds were dark,
  And the boat return'd no more.

But oft, from the Indian hunter's camp,
  This lover and maid so true
Are seen at the hour of midnight damp,
To cross the Lake by a fire-fly lamp,
  And paddle their white canoe!

This does not need any explanation, I think; it is not perhaps exactly great poetry; but it is pretty and the work of the greatest of English song-writers;—and it is one of the few things in the way of a song, written by an Englishman, which can be translated successfully into any language without losing its charm.

I told you that except Kingsley's poem on the mango-tree few English poems on foreign trees rise into the first class; and the same may be said of American poems on exotic growth. But I shall quote to you Whittier's poem on the palm—at least a part of it; for, with the expansion of the Japanese Empire southward, the true palm has become a Japanese tree, and you may feel more interested in it. The subject of the poem is the utility of the tree. Next to the bamboo, no other tree is so useful to mankind.

THE PALM-TREE

Is it the palm, the cocoa-palm,
On the Indian Sea, by the isles of balm?
Or is it a ship in the breezeless calm?

A ship whose keel is of palm beneath,
Whose ribs of palm have a palm-bark sheath,
And a rudder of palm it steereth with.

Branches of palm are its spars and rails,
Fibres of palm are its woven sails,
And the rope is of palm that idly trails!

Why does the good ship bearso well?
The cocoa-nut with its stony shell,
And the milky saw of its inner cell.

What are its jars, so smooth and fine,
But hollowed nuts, filled with oil and wine,
And the cabbage that ripens under the Line?

You must understand that all the productions here described are products of different kinds of palm trees. The oil spoken of is palm-oil, a great article of commerce; the wine is palm-wine, obtained by fermenting the juice of a particular tree; and the "cabbage" is the head and heart of the magnificent tree called the cabbage palm which grows often to the height of two hundred feet. And now let us hear about the captain:

In the cabin he sits on a palm-mat soft,
From a beaker of palm his drink is quaffed,
And a palm-thatch shields from the sun aloft!

His dress is woven of palmy strands,
And he holds a palm-leaf scroll in his hands,
Traced with the Prophet's wise commands!

The turban folded about his head
Was daintily wrought of the palm-leaf braid,
And the fan that cools him of palm was made.

Of threads of palm was the carpet spun
Whereon he kneels when the day is done,
And the foreheads of Islam are bowed as one!

To him the palm is a gift divine,
Wherein all uses of man combine,—
House, and raiment, and food, and wine!

And, in the hour of his great release,
His need of the palm shall only cease
With the shroud wherein he lieth in peace.*

The regions described here is the whole of that part of the East about the Malay Peninsula and southward, and eastward through the islands where the Mohammedan religion chiefly prevails. In those richly fertile countries various kinds of palm are put to all the uses described. I think you have heard of Sanscrit books, or perhaps Pali books, written upon palm leaves; and in the Malay Peninsula and in Siam and Burmah palm leaves have long been used for manuscripts. The reference to the carpet you must understand as being a reference to the "praying-carpets"—not an ordinary carpet. Every good Mohammedan carries about with him when he travels a little square of carpet to kneel upon while making his prayer—which must be done three times every day. The evening prayer is the particular prayer here meant by Whittier; and the line, "when the foreheads of Islam are bowed as one," means when all the people in the Mohammedan world bend their heads in prayer and turn their faces toward the holy city of Mecca.

Although English poetry on the subject of trees is less rich and varied than you might expect, the same might be said, I imagine, of most European poetry within the same limits. For, remember, we have been considering poems only about great trees—not about shrubs and plants and flowers. If we went back to old Greek times we should find a great deal of poetry and legend on the subject of the first creation of trees—you know that in Greek mythology almost every tree and flower was supposed to have been, at some time or other, a man or woman, a boy or girl, changed by the gods in consequence of either pity or anger. A great number of such stories you can find for yourselves, if you wish, in

* The following stanza completes the poem:—
"Allah il Allah!" he sings his psalm,
On the Indian Sea, by the isles of balm;
"Thanks to Allah who gives the palm!"

Ovid's "Metamorphoses." But the stories would not come within the subject of this lecture. Neither would the beautiful Greek story about the Tree Spirit—which you will find put into beautiful English verse by Landor. We are speaking of English poetry on trees—not of classic poetry, or Romance poetry. As I said before, I doubt whether any modern European poetry is very rich on this topic. But, before concluding this lecture I must remind you that the greatest of all poetical ideas about trees was that of the old Northern religion—the old Scandinavian mythology: the tradition of the great Ash-Tree Yggdrasill. This mighty tree, whose roots grew in Night and Death and whose branches reached far beyond Heaven,—supporting both the world of men and the paradise of the gods upon its branches—has now become for us the grand symbol of the Universal Life. This is one instance of a religious myth obtaining Immortality through transformation into world-poetry. We know now very much more than the old Norsemen knew about the Universe; but we do not feel in the least inclined to smile at their old imagination that the world was supported by an Ash-Tree. Not at all. Primitive though the fancy was, it was one of the grandest fancies in any religion; and, like all great religious myths, it contained the suggestion of a grand truth.

CHAPTER XX

SOME POEMS ABOUT INSECTS

ONE of the great defects of English books printed in the last century is the want of an index. The importance of being able to refer at once to any subject treated of in a book was not recognized until the days when exact scholarship necessitated indexing of the most elaborate kind. But even now we constantly find good books severely criticized because of this deficiency. All that I have said tends to show that even to-day in Western countries the immense importance of systematic arrangement in literary collections is not sufficiently recognized. We have, of course, a great many English anthologies,—that is to say, collections of the best typical compositions of a certain epoch in poetry or in prose. But you must have observed that, in Western countries, nearly all such anthologies are compiled chronologically —not according to the subject of the poems. To this general rule there are indeed a few exceptions. There is a collection of love poetry by Watson, which is famous; a collection of child poetry by Patmore; a collection of "society verse" by Locker; and several things of that sort. But even here the arrangement is not of a special kind; nor is it ever divided according to the subject of each particular poem. I know that some books have been published of late years with such titles as "Poems of the Sea," "Poems of Nature" —but these are of no literary importance at all, and they are not compiled by competent critics. Besides, the subject-heads are always of much too general a kind. The French are far in advance of the English in the art of making anthologies; but even in such splendid anthologies as those of Crépet and of Lemerre the arrangement is of the most

general kind,—chronological, and little more.

I was reminded to tell you this, because of several questions recently asked me, which I found it impossible to answer. Many a Japanese student might suppose that Western poetry has its classified arrangements corresponding in some sort to those of Japanese poetry. Perhaps the Germans have something of the kind, but the English and French have not. Any authority upon the subject of Japanese literature can, I have been told, inform himself almost immediately as to all that has been written in poetry upon a particular subject. Japanese poetry has been classified and sub-classified and double-indexed or even quadruple-indexed after a manner incomparably more exact than anything English anthologies can show. I am aware that this fact is chiefly owing to the ancient rules about subjects, seasons, contrasts, and harmonies, after which the old poets used to write. But whatever be said about such rules, there can be no doubt at all of the excellence of the arrangements which the rules produced. It is greatly to be regretted that we have not in English a system of arrangement enabling the student to discover quickly all that has been written upon a particular subject—such as roses, for example, or pine trees, or doves, or the beauties of the autumn season. There is nobody to tell you where to find such things; and as the whole range of English poetry is so great that it takes a great many years even to glance through it, a memorized knowledge of the subjects is impossible for the average man. I believe that Macaulay would have been able to remember almost any reference in the poetry then accessible to scholars,—just as the wonderful Greek scholar Porson could remember the exact place of any text in the whole of Greek literature, and even all the variations of that text. But such men are born only once in hundreds of years; the common memory cannot attempt to emulate their feats. And it is very difficult at the present time for the ordinary student of poetry to tell you just how much has been written upon any particular subject by the best English poets.

Now you will recognize some difficulties in the way of a lecturer in attempting to make classifications of English poetry after the same manner that Japanese classification can be made of Japanese poetry. One must read enormously merely to obtain one's materials, and even then the result is not to be thought of as exhaustive. I am going to try to give you a few lectures upon English poetry thus classified, but we must not expect that the lectures will be authoritatively complete. Indeed, we have no time for lectures of so thorough a sort. All that I can attempt will be to give you an idea of the best things that English poets have thought and expressed upon certain subjects.

You know that the old Greeks wrote a great deal of beautiful poetry about insects,—especially about musical insects, crickets, cicadæ, and other insects such as those the Japanese poets have been writing about for so many hundreds of years. But in modern Western poetry there is very little, comparatively speaking, about insects. The English poets have all written a great deal about birds, and especially about singing birds; but very little has been written upon the subject of insects—singing insects. One reason is probably that the number of musical insects in England is very small, perhaps owing to the climate. American poets have written more about insects than English poets have done, though their work is of a much less finished kind. But this is because musical insects in America are very numerous. On the whole, we may say that neither in English nor in French poetry will you find much about the voices of crickets, locusts, or cicadæ. I could not even give you a special lecture upon that subject. We must take the subject "insect" in a rather general signification; and if we do that we can edit together a nice little collection of poetical examples.

The butterfly was regarded by the Greeks especially as the emblem of the soul and therefore of immortality. We have several Greek remains, picturing the butterfly as perched upon a skull, thus symbolizing life beyond death. And

the metamorphosis of the insect is, you know, very often referred to in Greek philosophy. We might expect that English poets would have considered the butterfly especially from this point of view; and we do have a few examples. Perhaps the best known is that of Coleridge.

> The Butterfly the ancient Grecians made
> The soul's fair emblem, and its only name—
> But of the soul, escaped the slavish trade
> Of earthly life!—For in this mortal frame
> Ours is the reptile's lot, much toil, much blame,
> Manifold motions making little speed,
> And to deform and kill the things whereon we feed.

The allusion to the "name" is of course to the Greek word, *Psyche*, which signifies both soul and butterfly. Psyche, as the soul, was pictured by the Greeks as a beautiful girl, with a somewhat sad face, and butterfly wings springing from her shoulders. Coleridge tells us here that although the Greeks likened the soul to the butterfly, we must remember what the butterfly really is,—the last and highest state of insect-being—"escaped the slavish trade of earthly life." What is this so-called slavish trade? It is the necessity of working and struggling in order to live—in order to obtain food. The butterfly is not much of an eater; some varieties, indeed, do not eat at all. All the necessity for eating ended with the life of the larva. In the same manner religion teaches that the soul represents the changed state of man. In this life a man is only like a caterpillar; death changes him into a chrysalis, and out of the chrysalis issues the winged soul which does not have to trouble itself about such matters as eating and drinking. By the word "reptile" in this verse, you must understand caterpillar. Therefore the poet speaks of all our human work as manifold motions making little speed; you have seen how many motions a caterpillar must make in order to go even a little distance, and you must have noticed the manner in which it spoils the appearance of the plant upon which it feeds.

There is here an allusion to the strange and terrible fact that all life—and particularly the life of man—is maintained only by the destruction of other life. In order to live we must kill—perhaps only plants, but in any case we must kill.

Wordsworth has several poems on butterflies, but only one of them is really fine. It is fine, not because it suggests any deep problem, but because with absolute simplicity it pictures the charming difference of character in a little boy and a little girl playing together in the fields. The poem is addressed to the butterfly.

Stay near me—do not take thy flight!
A little longer stay in sight!
Much converse do I find in thee,
Historian of my infancy!
Float near me; do not yet depart!
Dead times revive in thee:
Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art!
A solemn image to my heart,
  My father's family.

Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days,
The time, when, in our childish plays,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together chased the butterfly!
A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey:—with leaps and springs
I followed on from brake to bush;
But she, God love her! feared to brush
The dust from off its wings.

What we call and what looks like dust on the wings of a butterfly, English children are now taught to know as really beautiful scales or featherlets, but in Wordsworth's time the real structure of the insect was not so well known as now to little people. Therefore to the boy the coloured matter brushed from the wings would only have seemed so much dust. But the little girl, with the instinctive tenderness of the future mother-soul in her, dreads to touch those

strangely delicate wings; she fears, not only to spoil, but also to hurt.

Deeper thoughts than memory may still be suggested to English poets by the sight of a butterfly, and probably will be for hundreds of years to come. Perhaps the best poem of a half-metaphorical, half-philosophical thought about butterflies is the beautiful prologue to Browning's "Fifine at the Fair," which prologue is curiously entitled "Amphibian"—implying that we are about to have a reference to creatures capable of living in two distinctive elements, yet absolutely belonging neither to the one nor to the other. The poet swims out far into the sea on a beautiful day; and suddenly, looking up, perceives a beautiful butterfly flying over his head, as if watching him. The sight of the insect at once suggests to him its relation to Greek fancy as a name for the soul; then he begins to wonder whether it might not really be the soul, or be the symbol of the soul, of a dead woman who loved him. From that point of the poem begins a little metaphysical fantasy about the possible condition of souls.

The fancy I had to-day,
  Fancy which turned a fear!
I swam far out in the bay,
  Since waves laughed warm and clear.

I lay and looked at the sun,
  The noon-sun looked at me:
Between us two, no one
  Live creature, that I could see.

Yes! There came floating by
  Me, who lay floating too,
Such a strange butterfly!
  Creature as dear as new:

Because the membraned wings
  So wonderful, so wide,
So sun-suffused, were things
  Like soul and nought beside.

So much for the conditions of the poet's revery. He is swimming in the sea; above his face, only a few inches away, the beautiful butterfly is hovering. Its apparition makes him think of many things—perhaps first about the dangerous position of the butterfly, for if it should only touch the water, it is certain to be drowned. But it does not touch the water; and he begins to think how clumsy is the man who moves in water compared with the insect that moves in air, and how ugly a man is by comparison with the exquisite creature which the Greeks likened to the soul or ghost of the man. Thinking about ghosts leads him at once to the memory of a certain very dear ghost about which he forthwith begins to dream.

What if a certain soul
  Which early slipped its sheath,
And has for its home the whole
  Of heaven, thus look beneath,

Thus watch one who, in the world,
  Both lives and likes life's way,
Nor wishes the wings unfurled
  That sleep in the worm, they say?

But sometimes when the weather
  Is blue, and warm waves tempt
To free oneself of tether,
  And try a life exempt

From worldly noise and dust,
  In the sphere which overbrims
With passion and thought,—why, just
  Unable to fly, one swims!

This is better understood by paraphrase: "I wonder if the soul of a certain person, who lately died, slipped so gently out of the hard sheath of the perishable body—I wonder if she does not look down from her home in the sky upon me, just as that little butterfly is doing at this moment. And I wonder if she laughs at the clumsiness of this poor

swimmer, who finds it so much labour even to move through the water, while she can move through whatever she pleases by the simple act of wishing. And this man, strangely enough, does not want to die, and to become a ghost. He likes to live very much; he does not yet desire those soul-wings which are supposed to be growing within the shell of his body, just as the wings of the butterfly begin to grow in the chrysalis. He does not want to die at all. But sometimes he wants to get away from the struggle and the dust of the city, and to be alone with nature; and then, in order to be perfectly alone, he swims. He would like to fly much better; but he can not. However, swimming is very much like flying; only the element of water is thicker than air."

However, more than the poet's words is suggested here. We are really told that what a fine mind desires is spiritual life, pure intellectual life—free from all the trammels of bodily necessity. Is not the swimmer really a symbol of the superior mind in its present condition? Your best swimmer cannot live under the water, neither can he rise into the beautiful blue air. He can only keep his head in the air; his body must remain in the grosser element. Well, a great thinker and poet is ever thus—floating between the universe of spirit and the universe of matter. By his mind he belongs to the region of pure mind,—the ethereal state; but the hard necessity of living keeps him down in the world of sense and grossness and struggle. On the other hand the butterfly, freely moving in a finer element, better represents the state of spirit or soul.

What is the use of being dissatisfied with nature? The best we can do is to enjoy in the imagination those things which it is not possible for us to enjoy in fact.

Emancipate through passion
  And thought, with sea for sky,
We substitute, in a fashion,
  For heaven—poetry;

Which sea, to all intent,
  Gives flesh such noon-disport,
As a finer element
  Affords the spirit-sort.

Now you see where the poet's vision of a beautiful butterfly has been leading his imagination. The nearest approach which we can make to the act of flying, in the body, is the act of swimming. The nearest approach that we can make to the heavenly condition, mentally, is in poetry. Poetry, imagination, the pleasure of emotional expression—these represent our nearest approach to paradise. Poetry is the sea in which the soul of man can swim even as butterflies can swim in the air, or happy ghosts swim in the finer element of the infinite ether. The last three stanzas of the poem are very suggestive:

And meantime, yonder streak
  Meets the horizon's verge;
That is the land, to seek
  If we tire or dread the surge:

Land the solid and safe—
  To welcome again (confess!)
When, high and dry, we chafe
  The body, and don the dress.

Does she look, pity, wonder
  At one who mimics flight,
Swims—heaven above, sea under,
  Yet always earth in sight?

"Streak," meaning an indistinct line, here refers to the coast far away, as it appears to the swimmer. It is just such a word as a good Japanese painter ought to appreciate in such a relation. In suggesting that the swimmer is glad to return to shore again and get warm, the poet is telling us that however much we may talk about the happiness of spirits in heaven—however much we may praise heaven in poetry—the truth is that we are very fond of this world,

we like comfort, we like company, we like human love and human pleasures. There is a good deal of nonsense in pretending that we think heaven is a better place than the world to which we belong. Perhaps it is a better place, but, as a matter of fact, we do not know anything about it; and we should be frightened if we could go beyond a certain distance from the real world which we do know. As he tells us this, the poet begins again to think about the spirit of the dead woman. Is she happy? Is she looking at him—and pitying him as he swims, taking good care not to go too far away from the land? Or is she laughing at him, because in his secret thoughts he confesses that he likes to live—that he does not want to become a pure ghost at the present time?

Evidently a butterfly was quite enough, not only to make Browning's mind think very seriously, but to make that mind teach us the truth and seriousness which may attach to very small things—incidents, happenings of daily life, in any hour and place. I believe that is the greatest English poem we have on the subject of the butterfly.

The idea that a butterfly might be, not merely the symbol of the soul, but in very fact the spirit of a dead person, is somewhat foreign to English thought; and whatever exists in poetry on the subject must necessarily be quite new. The idea of a relation between insects, birds, or other living creatures, and the spirits of the dead, is enormously old in Oriental literature;—we find it in Sanskrit texts thousands of years ago. But the Western mind has not been accustomed to think of spiritual life as outside of man; and much of natural poetry has consequently remained undeveloped in Western countries. A strange little poem, "The White Moth," is an exception to the general rule that I have indicated; but I am almost certain that its author, A. T. Quiller-Couch, must have read Oriental books, or obtained his fancy from some Eastern source. As the knowledge of Indian literature becomes more general in England, we may expect to find poetry much influenced by Oriental ideas. At

the present time, such a composition as this is quite a strange anomaly.

If a leaf rustled, she would start:
And yet she died, a year ago.
How had so frail a thing the heart
To journey where she trembled so?
And do they turn and turn in fright,
Those little feet, in so much night?

The light above the poet's head
Streamed on the page and on the cloth,
And twice and thrice there buffeted
On the black pane a white-winged moth:
'T was Annie's soul that beat outside,
And "Open, open, open!" cried:

"I could not find the way to God;
There were too many flaming suns
For signposts, and the fearful road
Led over wastes where millions
Of tangled comets hissed and burned—
I was bewildered and I turned.

"O, it was easy then! I knew
Your window and no star beside.
Look up, and take me back to you!"
—He rose and thrust the window wide.
'T was but because his brain was hot
With rhyming; for he heard her not.

But poets polishing a phrase
Show anger over trivial things;
And as she blundered in the blaze
Towards him, on ecstatic wings,
He raised a hand and smote her dead;
Then wrote "*That I had died instead!*"

The lover, or bereaved husband, is writing a poem of which a part is given in the first stanza—which is therefore put in italics. The action proper begins with the second stanza. The soul of the dead woman taps at the window

in the shape of a night-butterfly or moth—imagining, perhaps, that she has still a voice and can make herself heard by the man that she loves. She tells the story of her wandering in space—privileged to pass to heaven, yet afraid of the journey. Now the subject of the poem which the lover happens to be writing inside the room is a memory of the dead woman—mourning for her, describing her in exquisite ways. He cannot hear her at all; he does not hear even the beating of the little wings at the window, but he stands up and opens the window—because he happens to feel hot and tired. The moth thinks that he has heard her, that he knows; and she flies toward him in great delight. But he, thinking that it is only a troublesome insect, kills her with a blow of his hand; and then sits down to continue his poem with the words, "Oh, how I wish I could have died instead of that dear woman!" Altogether this is a queer poem in English literature, and I believe almost alone of its kind. But it is queer only because of its rarity of subject. As for construction, it is very good indeed.

I do not know that it is necessary to quote any more poems upon butterflies or moths. There are several others; but the workmanship and the thought are not good enough or original enough to justify their use here as class texts. So I shall now turn to the subject of dragon-flies. Here we must again be very brief. References to dragon-flies are common throughout English poetry, but the references signify little more than a mere colourless mention of the passing of the insect. However, it so happens that the finest modern lines of pure description written about any insect, are about dragon-flies. And they also happen to be by Tennyson. Naturalists and men of science have greatly praised these lines, because of their truth to nature and the accuracy of observation which they show. You will find them in the poem entitled "The Two Voices."

> To-day I saw the dragon-fly
> Come from the wells where he did lie.

An inner impulse rent the veil
Of his old husk: from head to tail
Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.

He dried his wings: like gauze they grew;
Thro' crofts and pastures wet with dew
A living flash of light he flew.

There are very few real poems, however, upon the dragon-fly in English, and considering the extraordinary beauty and grace of the insect, this may appear strange to you. But I think that you can explain the strangeness at a later time. The silence of English poets on the subject of insects as compared with Japanese poets is due to general causes that we shall consider at the close of the lecture.

Common flies could scarcely seem to be a subject for poetry—disgusting and annoying creatures as they are. But there are more poems about the house-fly than about the dragon-fly. Last year I quoted for you a remarkable and rather mystical composition by the poet Blake about accidentally killing a fly.* Blake represents his own thoughts about the brevity of human life which had been aroused by the incident. It is a charming little poem; but it does not describe the fly at all. I shall not quote it here again, because we shall have many other things to talk about; but I shall give you the text of a famous little composition by Oldys on the same topic. It has almost the simplicity of Blake,—and certainly something of the same kind of philosophy.

Busy, curious, thirsty fly!
Drink with me, and drink as I.
Freely welcome to my cup,
Couldst thou sip and sip it up:
Make the most of life you may;
Life is short and wears away.

Both alike are mine and thine,
Hastening quick to their decline.
Thine's a summer, mine's no more,

* See *On Poets*, p. 475

Though repeated to threescore.
Threescore summers, when they're gone,
Will appear as short as one!

The suggestion is that, after all, time is only a very relative affair in the cosmic order of things. The life of the man of sixty years is not much longer than the life of the insect which lives but a few hours, days, or months. Had Oldys, who belongs to the eighteenth century, lived in our own time, he might have been able to write something very much more curious on this subject. It is now known that time, to the mind of an insect, must appear immensely longer than it appears to the mind of a man. It has been calculated that a mosquito or a gnat moves its wings between four and five hundred times a second. Now the scientific dissection of such an insect, under the microscope, justifies the opinion that the insect must be conscious of each beat of the wings—just as a man feels that he lifts his arm or bends his head every time that the action is performed. A man cannot even imagine the consciousness of so short an interval of time as the five-hundredth part of one second. But insect consciousness can be aware of such intervals; and a single day of life might well appear to the gnat as long as the period of a month to a man. Indeed, we have reason to suppose that to even the shortest lived insect life does not appear short at all; and that the ephemera may actually, so far as feeling is concerned, live as long as a man—although its birth and death does occur between the rising and the setting of the sun.

We might suppose that bees would form a favourite subject of poetry, especially in countries where apiculture is practised upon such a scale as in England. But such is not really the case. Nearly every English poet makes some reference to bees, as Tennyson does in the famous couplet—

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.*

* *The Princess* vii 221-2

But the only really remarkable poem addressed to a bee is by the American philosopher Emerson. The poem in question cannot be compared as to mere workmanship with some others which I have cited; but as to thinking, it is very interesting, and you must remember that the philosopher who writes poetry should be judged for his thought rather than for the measure of his verse. The whole is not equally good, nor is it short enough to quote entire; I shall only give the best parts.

Burly, dozing humble-bee,
Where thou art is clime for me.

. . . .

Zigzag steerer, desert cheerer,
Let me chase thy waving lines;
Keep me nearer, me thy hearer,
Singing over shrubs and vines.

Insect lover of the sun,
Joy of thy dominion!
Sailor of the atmosphere;
Swimmer through the waves of air;
Voyager of light and noon;
Epicurean of June;
Wait, I prithee, till I come
Within earshot of thy hum,—
All without is martyrdom.

. . . .

Thou, in sunny solitudes,
Rover of the underwoods,
The green silence dost displace
With thy mellow, breezy bass.

. . . .

Aught unsavory or unclean
Hath my insect never seen.

. . . .

Wiser far than human seer,
Yellow-breeched philosopher!
Seeing only what is fair,
Sipping only what is sweet,
Thou dost mock at fate and care,
Leave the chaff, and take the wheat.

This is really the poetry of the bee—visiting only beautiful flowers, and sucking from them their perfumed juices—always healthy, happy, and surrounded by beautiful things. A great rover, a constant wanderer is the bee—visiting many different places, seeing many different things, but stopping only to enjoy what is beautiful to the sight and sweet to the taste. Now Emerson tells us that a wise man should act like the bee—never stopping to look at what is bad, or what is morally ugly, but seeking only what is beautiful and nourishing for the mind. It is a very fine thought; and the manner of expressing it is greatly helped by Emerson's use of curious and forcible words—such as "burly," "zigzag," and the famous expression "yellow-breeched philosopher"—which has passed almost into an American household phrase. The allusion of course is to the thighs of the bee, covered with the yellow pollen of flowers so as to make them seem covered with yellow breeches, or trousers reaching only to the knees.

I do not of course include in the lecture such child songs about insects as that famous one beginning with the words, "How does the little busy bee improve each shining hour." This is no doubt didactically very good; but I wish to offer you only examples of really fine poetry on the topic. Therefore leaving the subject of bees for the time, let us turn to the subject of musical insects—the singers of the fields and woods—grasshoppers and crickets.

In Japanese poetry there are thousands of verses upon such insects. Therefore it seems very strange that we have scarcely anything on the subject in English. And the little that we do have is best represented by the poem of Keats on the night cricket. The reference is probably to what we call in England the hearth cricket, an insect which hides in houses, making itself at home in some chink of the brick work or stone work about a fireplace, for it loves the warmth. I suppose that the small number of poems in English about crickets can be partly explained by the scarcity of night singers. Only the house cricket seems to be very well known.

But on the other hand, we cannot so well explain the rarity of composition in regard to the day-singers—the grasshoppers and locusts which can be heard, though somewhat faintly, in any English country place after sunset during the warm season. Another queer thing is that the example set by Keats has not been imitated or at least followed even up to the present time.

The poetry of earth is never dead:
    When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
    And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;
That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead
    In summer luxury,—he has never done
    With his delights, for when tired out with fun,
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
    On a lone winter evening, when the frost
        Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
    And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
        The Grasshopper's among some grassing hills.

In this charming composition you will have noticed the word "stove"; but you must remember that this is not a stove as we understand the term now, and signifies only an old fashioned fireplace of brick or tile. In Keats's day there were no iron stoves. Another word which I want to notice is the word "poetry" in the first line. By the poetry of nature the poet means the voices of nature—the musical sounds made by its idle life in woods and fields. So the word "poetry" here has especially the meaning of song, and corresponds very closely to the Japanese word which signifies either poem or song, but perhaps more especially the latter. The general meaning of the sonnet is that at no time, either in winter or in summer, is nature silent. When the birds do not sing, the grasshoppers make music for us; and when the cold has killed or banished all other life, then the house cricket begins with its thin sweet song to make us

think of the dead voices of the summer.

There is not much else of note about the grasshopper and the cricket in the works of the great English poets. But perhaps you do not know that Tennyson in his youth took up the subject and made a long poem upon the grasshopper, but suppressed it after the edition of 1842. He did not think it good enough to rank with his other work. But a few months ago the poems which Tennyson suppressed in the final edition of his works have been published and carefully edited by an eminent scholar,* and among these poems we find "The Grasshopper." I will quote some of this poem, because it is beautiful, and because the fact of its suppression will serve to show you how very exact and careful Tennyson was to preserve only the very best things that he wrote.

Voice of the summer wind,
  Joy of the summerplain,
  Life of the summerhours,
 Carol clearly, bound along,
  No Tithon thou as poets feign
(Shame fall 'em they are deaf and blind)
 But an insect lithe and strong,
  Bowing the seeded summerflowers.
Prove their falsehood and thy quarrel,
  Vaulting on thine airy feet.
Clap thy shielded sides and carol,
  Carol clearly, chirrup sweet.
Thou art a mailéd warrior in youth and strength complete;
  Armed cap-a-pie,
  Full fair to see;
    Unknowing fear,
  Undreading loss,
    A gallant cavalier,
Sans peur et sans reproche,
  In sunlight and in shadow,
  The Bayard of the meadow.

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* The reference is to *The Early Poems of Alfred Lord Tennyson. Edited by J. C. Collins. 1900*

The reference to Tithonus is a reference of course to a subject afterwards beautifully elaborated in another poem by Tennyson, the great poem of "Tithonus." The Bayard here referred to was the great French model of perfect chivalry, and is sometimes called the last of the feudal knights. He was said to be without fear and without blame. You may remember that he was killed by a ball from a gun—it was soon after the use of artillery in war had been introduced; and his dying words were to the effect that he feared there was now an end of great deeds, because men had begun to fight from a distance with machines instead of fighting in the old knightly and noble way with sword and spear. The grasshopper, covered with green plates and bearing so many little sharp spines upon its long limbs, seems to have suggested to Tennyson the idea of a fairy knight in green armour.

As I said before, England is poor in singing insects, while America is rich in them—almost, perhaps, as rich as Japan, although you will not find as many different kinds of singing insects in any one state or district. The singing insects of America are peculiar to particular localities. But the Eastern States have perhaps the most curious insect of this kind. It is called the Katydid. This name is spelt either Katydid, or Catydid—though the former spelling is preferable. Katy, or Katie, is the abbreviation of the name Catherine; very few girls are called by the full name Catherine (also spelt Katherine); because the name is long and unmusical, their friends address them usually as Katy, and their acquaintances, as Kate. Well, the insect of which I am speaking, a kind of *semi*, makes a sound resembling the sound of the words "Katie did!" Hence the name—one of the few corresponding to the names given to the Japanese *semi*, such as *tsuku-tsuku-bôshi*, or *minmin-semi*. The most interesting composition upon this cicada is by Oliver Wendell Holmes, but it is of the lighter sort of verse, with a touch of humour in it. I shall quote a few verses only, as the piece contains some allusions that would require ex-

planation at considerable length.

I love to hear thine earnest voice,
Wherever thou art hid,
Thou testy little dogmatist,
Thou pretty Katydid!
Thou mindest me of gentlefolks,—
Old gentlefolks are they,—
Thou say'st an undisputed thing
In such a solemn way.

. . . .

Oh tell me where did Katy live,
And what did Katy do?
And was she very fair and young,
And yet so wicked too?
Did Katy love a naughty man,
Or kiss more cheeks than one?
I warrant Katy did no more
Than many a Kate has done.

. . . .

Ah, no! the living oak shall crash,
That stood for ages still,
The rock shall rend its mossy base
And thunder down the hill,
Before the little Katydid
Shall add one word, to tell
The mystic story of the maid
Whose name she knows so well.

The word "testy" may be a little unfamiliar to some of you; it is a good old-fashioned English term for "cross," "irritable." The reference to the "old gentlefolks" implies the well-known fact that in argument old persons are inclined to be much more obstinate than young people. And there is also a hint in the poem of the tendency among old ladies to blame the conduct of young girls even more severely than may be necessary. There is nothing else to recommend the poem except its wit and the curiousness of the subject. There are several other verses about the same

creature, by different American poets; but none of them is quite so good as the composition of Holmes. However, I may cite a few verses from one of the earlier American poets, Philip Freneau, who flourished in the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth. He long anticipated the fancy of Holmes; but he spells the word Caty-did.

In a branch of willow hid,
Sings the evening Caty-did:
From the lofty locust bough
Feeding on a drop of dew,
In her suit of green arrayed
Hear her singing in the shade—
Caty-did, Caty-did, Caty-did!

. . . .

While upon a leaf you tread,
Or repose your little head
On your sheet of shadows laid,
All the day you nothing said;
Half the night your cheery tongue
Revelled out its little song,—
Nothing else but Caty-did.

. . . .

Tell me, what did Caty do?
Did she mean to trouble you?
Why was Caty not forbid
To trouble little Caty-did?
Wrong, indeed, at you to fling,
Hurting no one while you sing,—
Caty-did! Caty-did! Caty-did!

To Dr. Holmes the voice of the cicada seemed like the voice of an old obstinate woman, an old prude, accusing a young girl of some fault,—but to Freneau the cry of the little creature seemed rather to be like the cry of a little child complaining—a little girl, perhaps, complaining that somebody had been throwing stones at her, or had hurt her in some way. And, of course, the unfinished character of the phrase allows equally well either supposition.

Before going back to more serious poetry, I want—while we are speaking of American poets—to make one reference to the ironical or satirical poetry which insects have inspired in some minds, taking for example the poem by Charlotte Pekins Stetson about a butterfly. This author is rather a person of note, being a prominent figure in educational reforms and the author of a volume of poems of a remarkably strong kind in the didactic sense. In other words, she is especially a moral poet; and unless moral poetry be really very well executed, it is scarcely worth while classing it as literature. I think, however, that the symbolism in the following verses will interest you—especially when we comment upon them. The composition from which they are taken is entitled "A Conservative."

The poet, walking in the garden one morning, sees a butterfly, very unhappy, and gifted with power to express the reason of its unhappiness. The butterfly says, complaining of its wings,

"My legs are thin and few
  Where once I had a swarm!
Soft fuzzy fur – a joy to view—
  Once kept my body warm,
Before these flapping wing-things grew,
  To hamper and deform!"

At that outrageous bug I shot
  The fury of mine eye;
Said I, in scorn all burning hot,
  In rage and anger high,
"You ignominious idiot,
  Those wings were made to fly!"

"I do not want to fly," said he,
  "I only want to squirm!"
He drooped his wings dejectedly,
  But still his voice was firm:
"I do not want to be a fly!
  I want to be a worm!"

O yesterday of unknown lack!
  To-day of unknown bliss!
I left my fool in red and black;
  The last I saw was this,—
The creature madly climbing back
  Into his chrysalis.

Of course the wings here represent the powers of the mind—knowledge, reason, will. Men ought to use these in order to reach still nobler and higher states of life. But there are men who refuse to use their best faculties for this end. Such men are like butterflies who do not want to take the trouble to fly, but prefer the former condition of the caterpillar which does nothing but eat and sleep. As applied to certain forms of conservatism the satire is strong.

Something may now be said as to poems about spiders. But let me remind you that a spider is not an insect. Scientifically it has no relation to the great family of true insects; it belongs to the very distinct family of the arthropoda or "joint-footed" animals. But as it is still popularly called an insect in most European countries, we may be excused for including it in the subject of the present lecture. I suppose you know that one of the scientific names for this whole class of creatures is Arachnida,—a name derived from the Greek name Arachne. The story of Arachne is interesting, and everybody studying natural history ought to know it. Arachne was a young girl, according to the Greek story, who was very skilful at weaving. She wove cloths of many different colours and beautiful patterns, and everybody admired her work. This made her vain—so vain that at last she said that even the goddess of weaving could not weave better than she. Immediately after she had said that, the terrible goddess herself—Pallas Athena—entered the room. Pallas Athena was not only the goddess of wisdom, you know, but especially the goddess of young girls, presiding over the chastity, the filial piety, and the domestic occupations of virgins; and she was very angry at the conceit of this girl. So she said to her, "You have boasted that you

can weave as well as I can; now let me see you weave!" So Arachne was obliged to sit down at her loom and weave in the presence of the goddess; and the goddess also wove, far surpassing the weaving of Arachne. When the weaving was done, the goddess asked the girl, "Now see! which is the better, my work or yours?" And Arachne was obliged to confess that she had been defeated and put to shame. But the goddess was not thoroughly satisfied; to punish Arachne, she touched her lightly with the distaff, saying, "Spin for ever!" and thereupon Arachne was changed into a spider, which for ever spins and weaves perishable films of perishable shiny thread. Poetically we still may call a spider Arachne.

I have here a little poem of a touching character entitled "Arachne," by Rose Terry Cooke,—one of the symbolic poems which are becoming so numerous in these days of newer and deeper philosophy. I think that you will like it: a spinster, that is, a maiden past the age of girlhood, is the speaker.

I watch her in the corner there,
As, restless, bold, and unafraid,
She slips and floats along the air
Till all her subtile house is made.

Her home, her bed, her daily food,
All from that hidden store she draws;
She fashions it and knows it good,
By instinct's strong and sacred laws.

No tenuous threads to weave her nest,
She seeks and gathers there or here;
But spins it from her faithful breast,
Renewing still, till leaves are sere.

Then, worn with toil, and tired of life,
In vain her shining traps are set.
The frost hath hushed the insect strife
And gilded flies her charm forget.

But swinging in the snares she spun,
She sways to every wintry wind:
Her joy, her toil, her errand done,
Her corse the sport of storms unkind.

The symbolism of these verses will appear to you more significant when I tell you that it refers especially to conditions in New England in the present period. The finest American population—perhaps the finest Anglo-Saxons ever produced—were the New Englanders of the early part of the century. But with the growth of the new century, the men found themselves attracted elsewhere, especially westward; their shrewdness, their energies, their inventiveness, were needed in newer regions. And they wandered away by thousands and thousands, never to come back again, and leaving the women behind them. Gradually the place of these men was taken by immigrants of inferior development—but the New England women had nothing to hope for from these strangers. The bravest of them also went away to other states; but myriads who could not go were condemned by circumstances to stay and earn their living by hard work without any prospect of happy marriage. The difficulty which a girl of culture may experience in trying to live by the work of her hands in New England is something not easily imagined. But it is getting to be the same in most Western countries. Such a girl is watching a spider weaving in the corner of the same room where she herself is weaving; and she thinks, "Am I not like that spider, obliged to supply my every need by the work of my own hands, without sympathy, without friends? The spider will spin and catch flies until the autumn comes; then she will die. Perhaps I too must continue to spin until the autumn of my own life—until I become too old to work hard, and die of cold and of exhaustion."

Poor sister of the spinster clan!
I too from out my store within
My daily life and living plan,
My home, my rest, my pleasure spin.

I know thy heart when heartless hands
Sweep all that hard-earned web away:
Destroy its pearled and glittering bands
And leave thee homeless by the way.

I know thy peace when all is done,
Each anchored thread, each tiny knot,
Soft shining in the autumn sun;
A sheltered, silent, tranquil lot.

I know what thou hast never known,—
Sad presage to a soul allowed—
That not for life I spin, alone,
But day by day I spin my shroud.

The reference to the sweeping away of the spider's web, of course, implies the pain often caused to such hard-working girls by the meanness of men who employ them only to cheat them—shopkeepers or manufacturers who take their work without justly paying for it, and who criticize it as bad in order to force the owner to accept less money than it is worth. Again a reference may be intended to the destruction of the home by some legal trick—some unscrupulous method of cheating the daughter out of the property bequeathed to her by her parents.

Notice a few pretty words here. The "pearled" as applied to the spider's thread gives an intimation of the effect produced by dew on the thread, but there is also the suggestion of tears upon the thread work woven by the hands of the girl. The participle "anchored" is very pretty in its use here as an adjective, because this word is now especially used for rope-fastening, whether the rope be steel or hemp; and particularly for the fastening of the cables of a bridge. The last stanza might be paraphrased thus: "Sister Spider, I know more than you—and that knowledge makes me unhappy. You do not know, when you are spinning your little web, that you are really weaving your own shroud. But I know this, my work is slowly but surely killing me. And I know it because I have a soul—at least a mind made otherwise than yours."

The use of the word "soul" in the last stanza of this poem, brings me back to the question put forth in an earlier part of the lecture,—why European poets, during the last two thousand years, have written so little upon the subject of insects? Three thousand, four thousand years ago, the most beautiful Greek poetry—poetry more perfect than anything of English poetry—was written upon insects. In old Japanese literature poems upon insects are to be found by thousands. What is the signification of the great modern silence in Western countries upon this delightful topic? I believe that Christianity, as dogma, accounts for the long silence. The opinions of the early Church refused soul, ghost, intelligence of any sort, to other creatures than man. All animals were considered as automata—that is, as self-acting machines, moved by a something called instinct, for want of a better name. To talk about the souls of animals or the spirits of animals would have been very dangerous in the Middle Ages, when the Church had supreme power; it would indeed have been to risk or to invite an accusation of witchcraft, for demons were then thought to take the shape of animals at certain times. To discuss the *mind* of an animal would have been for the Christian faith to throw doubt upon the existence of human souls as taught by the Church; for if you grant that animals are able to think, then you must acknowledge that man is able to think without a soul, or you must acknowledge that the soul is not the essential principle of thought and action. Until after the time of Descartes, who later argued philosophically that animals were only machines, it was scarcely possible to argue rationally about the matter in Europe.

Nevertheless, we shall soon perceive that this explanation will not cover all the facts. You will naturally ask how it happens that, if the question be a question of animal souls, birds, horses, dogs, cats, and many other animals have been made the subject of Western poems from ancient times. The silence is only upon the subject of insects. And, again, Christianity has one saint—the most beautiful character in

all Christian hagiography—who thought of all nature in a manner that, at first sight, strangely resembles Buddhism. This saint was Francis of Assissi, born in the latter part of the twelfth century, so that he may be said to belong to the very heart of the Middle Ages,—the most supersitious epoch of Christianity. Now this saint used to talk to trees and stones as if they were animated beings. He addressed the sun as "my brother sun;" and he spoke of the moon as his sister. He preached not only to human beings, but also to the birds and the fishes; and he made a great many poems on these subjects, full of a strange and childish beauty. For example, his sermon to the doves, beginning, "My little sisters, the doves," in which he reminds them that their form is the emblem or symbol of the Holy Ghost, is a beautiful poem; and has been, with many others translated into nearly all modern languages. But observe that neither St. Francis nor any other saint has anything to say on the subject of insects.

Perhaps we must go back further than Christianity to guess the meaning of these distinctions. Among the ancient races of Asia, where the Jewish faith arose, there were strange and sinister beliefs about insects—old Assyrian superstitions, old Babylonian beliefs. Insects seemed to those early peoples very mysterious creatures (which they really are); and it appears to have been thought that they had a close relation to the world of demons and evil spirits. I suppose you know that the name of one of their gods, Beelzebub, signified the Lord of Flies. The Jews, as is shown by their Talmudic literature, inherited some of these ideas; and it is quite probable that they were passed on to the days of Christianity. Again, in the early times of Christianity in northern Africa the Church had to fight against superstitions of an equally strange sort derived from old Egyptian beliefs. Among the Egyptians, certain insects were sacred and became symbols of divinity,—such as the beetle. Now I imagine that for these reasons the subject of insects became at an early time a subject which Christianity thought dangerous, and that thereafter a kind of hostile opinion pre-

vailed regarding any literature upon this topic.

However, to-day things are very different. With the development of scientific studies—especially of microscopic study—it has been found that insects, far from being the lowliest of creatures, are the most highly organized of all beings; that their special senses are incomparably superior to our own; and that in natural history, from the evolutional standpoint, they have to be given first place. This of course renders it impossible any longer to consider the insect as a trifling subject. Moreover, the new philosophy is teaching the thinking classes in all Western countries the great truth of the unity of life. With the recognition of such unity, an insect must interest the philosophers—even the man of ordinary culture—quite as much as the bird or any other animal.

Nearly all the poems which I have quoted to you have been poems of very modern date—from which we may infer that interest in the subject of insects has been developing of late years only. In this connection it is interesting to note that a very religious poet, Whittier, gave us in the last days of his life a poem upon ants. This would have seemed strange enough in a former age; it does not seem strange to-day, and it is beautiful. The subject is taken from old Jewish literature.

KING SOLOMON AND THE ANTS

Out from Jerusalem
  The King rode with his great
  War chiefs and lords of state,
And Sheba's queen with them,

Comely, but black withal,
  To whom, perchance, belongs
  That wondrous Song of songs
Sensuous and mystical,

Whereto devout souls turn
  In fond, ecstatic dream,
  And through its earth born theme
The Love of loves discern.

Proud in the Syrian sun,
  In gold and purple sheen,
  The dusky Ethiop queen
Smiled on King Solomon.

Wisest of men, he knew
  The languages of all
  The creatures great or small
That trod the earth or flew.

Across an ant-hill led
  The king's path, and he heard
  Its small folk, and their word
He thus interpreted:

"Here comes the king men greet
  As wise and good and just,
  To crush us in the dust
Under his heedless feet."

The king, understanding the language of insects, turns to the queen and explains to her what the ants have just said. She advises him to pay no attention to the sarcasm of the ants—how dare such vile creatures speak thus about a king! But Solomon thinks otherwise:

"Nay," Solomon replied,
  "The wise and strong should seek
  The welfare of the weak,"
And turned his horse aside.

His train, with quick alarm,
  Curved with their leader round
  The ant-hill's peopled mound,
And left it free from harm.

The jewelled head bent low;
  "O king!" she said, "henceforth
  The secret of thy worth
And wisdom well I know.

"Happy must be the State
  Whose ruler heedeth more
  The murmurs of the poor
Than flatteries of the great."

The reference to "The Song of Songs"—also "The Song of Solomon" and "The Canticle of Canticles"—may require a little explanation. The line "Comely, but black withal," is borrowed from a verse of this song—"I am black but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon." In another part of the "Song" the reason of this blackness is given: "I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me." From which we can see that the word "black" only means dark, brown, tanned by the sun. Perhaps you do not know that as late as the middle of the eighteenth century it was still the custom in England to speak of a person with black hair and eyes as "a black man"—a custom which Charles Lamb had reason to complain of even at a later day. The tents referred to in the text were probably tents made of camel-skin, such as the Arabs still make, and the colour of these is not black but brown. Whether Solomon wrote the so-called "Song" or not we do not know; but the poet refers to a legend that it was written in praise of the beauty of the dark queen who came from Sheba to visit the wisest man of the world. Such is not, however, the opinion of modern scholars. The composition is really dramatic, although thrown into lyrical form, and as arranged by Renan and others it becomes a beautiful little play, of which each act is a monologue. "Sensuous" the poet correctly calls it; for it is a form of praise of woman's beauty in all its details, as appears in such famous verses as these: "How beautiful are thy feet in shoes, O prince's daughter; the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins which feed among the lilies." But Christianity, instead of dismissing this part of the Bible, interpreted the song mystically—insisting that the woman described meant the church, and the lover, Christ. Of course only very pious people continue to believe this; even the good Whittier perferred the legend that it was written about the Queen of Sheba.

I suppose that I ought to end this lecture upon insect

poetry by some quotation to which a moral or philosophical meaning can be attached. I shall end it therefore with a quotation from the poet Gray. The poetry of insects may be said to have first appeared in English literature during the second half of the eighteenth century, so that it is only, at the most, one hundred and fifty years old. But the first really fine poem of the eighteenth century relating to the subject is quite as good as anything since composed by Englishmen upon insect-life in general. Perhaps Gray referred especially to what we call May-flies—those delicate ghostly insects which hover above water surfaces in fine weather, but which die on the same day that they are born. He does not specify May-flies, however, and we may consider the moral of the poem quite apart from any particular kind of insects. You will find this reference in the piece entitled "Ode on the Spring," in the third, fourth, and fifth stanzas.

Still is the toiling hand of Care:
  The panting herds repose:
Yet hark, how thro' the peopled air
  The busy murmur glows!
The insect youth are on the wing,
Eager to taste the honied spring,
  And float amid the liquid noon:
Some lightly o'er the current skim,
Some shew their gaily-gilded trim
  Quick-glancing to the sun.

To Contemplation's sober eye
  Such is the race of Man:
And they that creep, and they that fly,
  Shall end where they began.
Alike the Busy and the Gay
But flutter thro' life's little day,
  In fortune's varying colours drest:
Brush'd by the hand of rough Mischance,
Or chill'd by age, their airy dance
  They leave, in dust to rest.

Methinks I hear in accents low
  The sportive kind reply:
Poor moralist! and what art thou?
  A solitary fly!
Thy Joys no glittering female meets,
No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets,
  No painted plumage to display:
On hasty wings thy youth is flown;
Thy sun is set; thy spring is gone—
  We frolick, while 'tis May.

The poet Gray was never married, and the last stanza which I have quoted refers jocosely to himself. It is an artistic device to set off the moral by a little mockery, so that it may not appear too melancholy. Seeing the insects sporting in the bright weather, but all doomed so soon to die, the poet first thinks:

"Well, men are just like insects after all, in the eternal order of things. Some insects can only creep, while others can fly; some insects can store up honey or grain; some live only a few hours; some live for a season. In like manner, some men are stupid and are unable to succeed in the world; whereas others rise to honour, accumulate wealth, reach honoured old age and see their children prosper. But the end is the same for all men, as it is for the insect,—dust." But then the poet fancies that he hears the voice of the insects reproaching him, and asking him: "What are you yourself, compared with an insect? You are not, perhaps, quite so good as an insect. For the insect at least fulfils its life upon earth; the male finds its female; the honey or the grain is stored up; and the joy of life is found by us. But you—what have you done in this world? You have no wife; you have no treasures; you have had no real part in the enjoyment of this world. And, therefore, however you may moralize, perhaps you are not worthy to compare yourself even with the bee or the ant or the dragon-fly that does its little duty in this impermanent state of existence."

CHAPTER XXI

SOME FRENCH POEMS ON INSECTS

LAST year I gave a lecture on the subject of English poems about insects, with some reference to the old Greek poems on the same subject. But I did not then have an opportunity to make any reference to French poems upon the same subject, and I think that it would be a pity not to give you a few examples.

Just as in the case of English poems about insects, nearly all the French literature upon this subject is new. Insect poetry belongs to the newer and larger age of thought, to the age that begins to perceive the great truth of the unity of life. We no longer find, even in natural histories, the insect treated as a mere machine and unthinking organism; on the contrary its habits, its customs and its manifestation both of intelligence and instinct are being very carefully studied in these times, and a certain sympathy, as well as a certain feeling of respect or admiration, may be found in the scientific treatises of the greatest men who write about insect life. So, naturally, Europe is slowly returning to the poetical standpoint of the old Greeks in this respect. It is not improbable that keeping caged insects as pets may again become a Western custom, as it was in Greek times, when cages were made of rushes or straw for the little creatures. I suppose you have heard that the Japanese custom is very likely to become a fashion in America. If that should really happen, the fact would certainly have an effect upon poetry. I think that it is very likely to happen.

The French poets who have written pretty things about insects are nearly all poets of our own times. Some of them treat the subject from the old Greek standpoint—indeed the

beautiful poem of Heredia upon the tomb of a grasshopper is perfectly Greek, and reads almost like a translation from the Greek. Other poets try to express the romance of insects in the form of a monologue, full of the thought of our own age. Others again touch the subject of insects only in connection with the subject of love. I will give one example of each method, keeping the best piece for the last, and beginning with a pretty fancy about a dragon-fly.*

MA LIBELLULE

En te voyant, toute mignonne
Blanche dans ta robe d'azur,
Je pensais à quelque madone
Drapée en un pan de ciel pur;

Je songeais à ces belles saintes
Que l'on voyait, au temps jadis,
Sourire sur les vitres peintes,
Montrant du doigt le paradis;

Et j'aurais voulu, loin du monde
Qui passait frivole entre nous,
Dans quelque retraite profonde,
T'adorer seul à deux genoux.

This first part of the poem is addressed of course to a beautiful child, some girl between the age of childhood and womanhood:

"Beholding thee, Oh darling one, all white in thy azure dress, I thought of some figure of the Madonna robed in a shred of pure blue sky;

"I dreamed of those beautiful figures of saints whom one used to see in olden times smiling in the stained glass of church windows, and pointing upward to Paradise;

"And I could have wished to adore you alone upon my bended knees in some far hidden retreat, away from the frivolous world that passed between us."

This little bit of ecstasy over the beauty and purity of a child is pretty, but not particularly original. However, it

* By François Fabié.

is only an introduction. Now comes the pretty part of the poem:

Soudain, un caprice bizarre
Change la sc ne et le décor,
Et mon esprit au loin s'égare
Sur des grands prés d'azur et d'or,

Où, près de ruisseaux minuscles,
Gazouillants comme des oiseaux,
Se poursuivent les libellules,
Ces fleurs vivantes des roseaux.

Enfant, n'es-tu pas l'une d'elles,
Qui me suit pour me consoler?
Vainement tu caches tes ailes:
Tu marches, mais tu sais voler.

Petite fée au bleu corsage,
Que je connus dès mon berceau,
En revoyant ton doux visage,
Je pense aux joncs de mon ruisseau!

Veux-tu qu'en amoureux fidèles
Nous revenions dans ces prés verts?
Libellule, reprends tes ailes,
Moi, je brûlerai tous mes vers;

Et nous irons, sous la lumière
D'un ciel plus frais et plus léger,
Chacun dans sa forme première,
Moi courir, et toi voltiger.

"Suddenly a strange fancy changes for me the scene and the scenery; and my mind wanders far away over great meadows of azure and gold,

"Where hard by tiny streams that murmur with a sound like voices of little birds, the dragon-flies, those living flowers of the reeds, chase each other at play.

"Child, art thou not one of those dragon-flies, following after me to console me? Ah, it is in vain that thou tryest to hide thy wings; thou dost walk, indeed, but well thou knowest how to fly!

"O little fairy with the blue corsage whom I knew even from the time I was a baby in the cradle; seeing again thy sweet face, I think of the rushes that border the little stream of my native village!

"Dost thou not wish that even now as faithful lovers we return to those green fields? O dragon-fly, take thy wings again, and I—I will burn all my poetry.

"And we shall go back, under the light of the sky more fresh and pure than this, each of us in the original form—I to run about, and thou to hover in the air as of yore."

The sight of a child's face has revived for the poet very suddenly and vividly, the recollection of the village home, the green fields of childhood, the little stream where he used to play with the same little girl, sometimes running after the dragon-fly. And now the queer fancy comes to him that she herself is so like a dragon-fly—so light, graceful, spiritual! Perhaps really she is a dragon-fly following him into the great city, where he struggles to live as a poet, just in order to console him. She hides her wings, but that is only to prevent other people knowing. Why not return once more to the home of childhood, back to the green fields and the sun? "Little dragon-fly," he says to her, "let us go back! Do you return to your beautiful summer shape, be a dragon-fly again, expand your wings of gauze; and I shall stop trying to write poetry. I shall burn my verses; I shall go back to the streams where we played as children; I shall run about again with the joy of a child, and with you beautifully flitting hither and thither as a dragon-fly."

Victor Hugo also has a little poem about a dragon-fly, symbolic only, but quite pretty. It is entitled "La Demoiselle;" and the other poem was entitled, as you remember, "Ma Libellule." Both words mean a dragon-fly, but not the same kind of dragon-fly. The French word "demoiselle," which might be adequately rendered into Japanese by the term "ojôsan," refers only to those exquisitely slender, graceful, slow-flitting dragon-flies known to the scientist by the name of Calopteryx. Of course you know the difference

by sight, and the reason of the French name will be poetically apparent to you.

Quand la demoiselle dorée
S'envole au départ des hivers,
Souvent sa robe diaprée,
Souvent son aile est déchirée
Aux mille dards des buissons verts.

Ainsi, jeunesse vive et frêle,
Qui, t'égarant de tous côtés,
Voles où ton instinct t'appele,
Souvent tu déchires ton aile
Aux épines des voluptés.

"When, at the departure of winter, the gilded dragon-fly begins to soar, often her many coloured robe, often her wing, is torn by the thousand thorns of the verdant shrubs.

"Even so, O frail and joyous Youth, who, wandering hither and thither, in every direction, flyest wherever thy instinct calls thee—even so thou dost often tear thy wings upon the thorns of pleasure."

You must understand that pleasure is compared to a rose-bush, whose beautiful and fragrant flowers attract the insects, but whose thorns are dangerous to the visitors. However, Victor Hugo does not use the word for rose-bush, for obvious reasons; nor does he qualify the plants which are said to tear the wings of the dragon-fly. I need hardly tell you that the comparison would not hold good in reference to the attraction of flowers, because dragon-flies do not care in the least about flowers, and if they happen to tear their wings among thorn bushes, it is much more likely to be in their attempt to capture and devour other insects. The merit of the poem is chiefly in its music and colour; as natural history it would not bear criticism. The most beautiful modern French poem about insects, beautiful because of its classical perfection, is, I think, a sonnet by Heredia, entitled "Épigramme funéraire"—that is to say, "Inscription for a Tombstone." This is an exact imitation of Greek

sentiment and expression, carefully studied after the poets of the "Anthology." Several such Greek poems are extant, recounting how children mourned for pet insects which had died in spite of all their care. The most celebrated one among these I quoted in a former lecture—the poem about the little Greek girl Myro who made a tomb for her grasshopper and cried over it. Heredia has very well copied the Greek feeling in this fine sonnet:

Ici gît, Etranger, la verte sauterelle
Que durant deux saisons nourrit la jeune Hellé,
Et dont l'aile vibrant sous le pied dentelé
Bruissait dans le pin, le cytise ou l'airelle.

Elle s'est tue, hélas! la lyre naturelle,
La muse des guérets, des sillons et du blé;
De peur que son léger sommeil ne soit troublé,
Ah! passe vite, ami, ne pèse point sur elle.

C'est là. Blanche, au milieu d'une touffe de thym,
Sa pierre funéraire est fraîchement posée.
Que d'hommes n'ont pas eu ce suprême destin!

Des larmes d'un enfant sa tombe est arrosée,
Et l'Aurore pieuse y fait chaque matin
Une libation de gouttes de rosée.

"Stranger, here reposes the green grasshopper that the young girl Hellé cared for during two seasons,—the grasshopper whose wings, vibrating under the strokes of its serrated feet, used to resound in the pine, the trefoil and the whortle-berry.

"She is silent now, alas! that natural lyre, muse of the unsown fields, of the furrows, and of the wheat. Lest her light sleep should be disturbed, ah! pass quickly, friend! do not be heavy upon her.

"It is there. All white, in the midst of a tuft of thyme her funeral monument is placed, in cool shadow; how many men have not been able to have this supremely happy end!

"By the tears of a child the insect's tomb is watered; and the pious goddess of dawn each morning there makes

a libation of drops of dew."

This reads very imperfectly in a hasty translation; the original charm is due to the perfect art of the form. But the whole thing, as I have said before, is really Greek, and based upon a close study of several little Greek poems on the same kind of subject. Little Greek girls thousands of years ago used to keep singing insects as pets, every day feeding them with slices of leek and with fresh water, putting in their little cages sprigs of the plants which they liked. The sorrow of the child for the inevitable death of her insect pets at the approach of winter, seems to have inspired many Greek poets. With all tenderness, the child would make a small grave for the insect, bury it solemnly, and put a little white stone above the place to imitate a grave-stone. But of course she would want an inscription for this tomb-stone—perhaps would ask some of her grown-up friends to compose one for her. Sometimes the grown-up friend might be a poet, in which case he would compose an epitaph for all time.

I suppose you perceive that the solemnity of this imitation of the Greek poems on the subject is only a tender mockery, a playful sympathy with the real grief of the child. The expression, "pass, friend," is often found in Greek funeral inscriptions together with the injunction to tread lightly upon the dust of the dead. There is one French word to which I will call attention,—the word "guérets." We have no English equivalent for this term, said to be a corruption of the Latin word "veractum," and meaning fields which have been ploughed but not sown.

Not to dwell longer upon the phase of art indicated by this poem, I may turn to the subject of crickets. There are many French poems about crickets. One by Lamartine is known to almost every French child.

Grillon solitaire
Ici comme moi,
Voix qui sors de terre,
Ah! réveille-toi!

J'attise la flamme,
C'est pour t'égayer;
Mais il manque une âme
Une âme au foyer.

Grillon solitaire,
Voix qui sors de terre,
Ah! réveille-toi,
Pour moi.

Quand j'étais petite
Comme ce berceau,
Et que Marguerite
Filait son fuseau;
Quand le vent d'automne
Faisait tout gémir,
Ton cri monotone
M'aidait à dormir.

Grillon solitaire,
Voix qui sors de terre,
Ah! réveille-toi,
Pour moi.

Seize fois l'année
A compté mes jours;
Dans la cheminée
Tu niches toujours.
Je t'écoute encore
Aux froides saisons,
Souvenir sonore
Des vieilles maisons.

Grillon solitaire,
Voix qui sors de terre,
Ah! réveille-toi,
Pour moi.

It is a young girl who thus addresses the cricket of the hearth, the house cricket. It is very common in country houses in Europe. This is what she says:

"Little solitary cricket, all alone here just like myself, little voice that comes up out of the ground, ah, awake for my sake!

"I am stirring up the fires, that is just to make you comfortable; but there lacks a presence by the hearth; a soul to keep me company.

"Solitary cricket, voice that issues from the ground, awaken, for my sake.

"When I was a very little girl, as little as that cradle in the corner of the room, then, while Margaret our servant sat there spinning, and while the autumn wind made everything moan outside, your monotonous cry used to help me to fall asleep.

"Solitary cricket, voice that issues from the ground, awaken, for my sake.

"Now I am sixteen years of age and you are still nestling in the chimneys as of old. I can hear you still in the cold season,—like a sound—memory,—a sonorous memory of old houses.

"Solitary cricket, voice that issues from the ground, awaken, O awaken for my sake."

I do not think this pretty little song needs any explanation; I would only call your attention to the natural truth of the fancy and the feeling. Sitting alone by the fire in the night, the maiden wants to hear the cricket sing, because it makes her think of her childhood, and she finds happiness in remembering it.

So far as mere art goes, the poem of Gautier on the cricket is very much finer than the poem of Lamartine, though not so natural and pleasing. But as Gautier was the greatest master of French verse in the nineteenth century, not excepting Victor Hugo, I think that one example of his poetry on insects may be of interest. He was very poor, compared with Victor Hugo; and he had to make his living by writing for newspapers, so that he had no time to become the great poet that nature intended him to be. However, he did find time to produce one volume of highly finished poetry, which is probably the most perfect verse of the nineteenth century, if not the most perfect verse ever made by a French poet; I mean the "Émaux et Camées." But

the little poem which I am going to read to you is not from the "Émaux et Camées."

Souffle, bise! Tombe à flots, pluie!
Dan mon palais tout noir de suie
Je ris de la pluie et du vent;
En attendant que l'hiver fuie,
Je reste au coin du feu, rêvant.

C'est moi qui suis l'esprit de l'âtre!
Le gaz, de sa langue bleuâtre,
Lèche plus doucement le bois.
La fumée, en filet d'albâtre,
Monte et se contourne à ma voix.

La bouilloire rit et babille;
La flamme aux pieds d'argent sautille
En accompagnant ma chanson;
La bûche de duvet s'habille;
La sève bout dans le tison.

. . . .

Pendant la nuit et la journée
Je chante sous la cheminée;
Dans mon langage de grillon
J'ai, des rebuts de son aînée,
Souvent consolé Cendrillon.

. . . .

Quel plaisir! prolonger sa veille,
Regarder la flamme vermeille
Prenant à deux bras le tison,
A tous les bruits prêter l'oreille,
Entendre vivre la maison!

Tapi dans sa niche bien chaude,
Sentir l'hiver qui pleure et rôde,
Tout blême, et le nez violet,
Tâchant de s'introduire en fraude
Par quelque fente du volet!

This poem is especially picturesque, and is intended to give us the comfortable sensations of a winter night by the fire, and the amusement of watching the wood burn and of hearing the kettle boiling. You will find that the French

has a particular quality of lucid expression; it is full of clearness and colour.

"Blow on, cold wind! pour down, O rain. I, in my soot-black palace laugh at both rain and wind; and while waiting for winter to pass I remain in my corner by the fire dreaming.

"It is I that am really the spirit of the hearth! The gaseous flame licks the wood more softly with its bluish tongue when it hears me; and the smoke rises up like an alabaster thread, and curls itself about (or twists) at the sound of my voice.

"The kettle chuckles and chatters; the golden-footed flame leaps, dancing to the accompaniment of my song (or in accompaniment to my song); the great log covers itself with down, the sap boils in the wooden embers. ("Duvet," meaning "down," refers to the soft fluffy white ash that forms upon the surface of burning wood.)

"All night and all day I sing below the chimney. Often in my cricket-language, I have consoled Cinderella for the snubs of her elder sister.

"Ah, what pleasure to sit up at night, and watch the crimson flames embracing the wood (or hugging the wood) with both arms at once, and to listen to all the sounds, and to hear the life of the house!

"Nestling in one's good warm nook, how pleasant to hear Winter, who weeps and prowls round about the house outside, all wan and blue-nosed with cold, trying to smuggle itself inside some chink in the shutter!"

Of course this does not give us much about the insect itself, which remain invisible in the poem, just as it really remains invisible in the house where the voice is heard. Rather does the poem express the feelings of the person who hears the cricket.

When we come to the subject of grasshoppers, I think that the French poets have done much better than the English. There are many poems on the field grasshopper; I scarcely know which to quote first. But I think you would be pleased with a little composition by the celebrated French

painter, Jules Breton. Like Rossetti he was both painter and poet; and in both arts he took for his subjects by preference things from country life. This little poem is entitled "Les Cigales." The word "cigales," though really identical with our word "cicala," seldom means the same thing. Indeed the French word may mean several different kinds of insects, and it is only by studying the text that we can feel quite sure what sort of insect is meant.

Lorsque dans l'herbe mûre aucun épi ne bouge,
Qu'à l'ardeur des rayons crépite le froment,
Que le coquelicot tombe languissamment
Sous le faible fardeau de sa corolle rouge,

Tous les oiseaux de l'air ont fait taire leurs chants;
Les ramiers paresseux, au plus noir des ramures,
Somnolents, dans les bois, ont cessé leurs murmures,
Loin du soleil muet incendiant les champs.

Dans le blés, cependant, d'intrépides cigales
Jetant leurs mille bruits, fanfare de l'été,
Ont frénétiquement et sans trêve agité
Leurs ailes sur l'airain de leurs folles cymbales.

Frémoissantes, debout sur les longs épis d'or,
Virtuoses qui vont s'éteindre avant l'automne,
Elles poussaient au ciel leur hymne monotone,
Qui dans l'ombre des nuits retentissait encor.

Et rien n'arrêtera leurs cris intarissables;
Quand on les chassera de l'avoine et des blés.
Elles émigreront sur les buissons brûlés
Qui se meurent de soif dans les déserts de sable.

Sur l'arbuste effeuillé, sur les chardons flétris
Qui laissent s'envoler leur blanche chevelure,
On reverra l'insecte à la forte encolure,
Pleine d'ivresse, toujours s'exalter dans ses cris;

Jusqu'à ce qu'ouvrant l'aile en lambeaux arrachée,
Exaspéré, brûlant d'un feu toujours plus pur,
Son oeil de bronze fixe et tendu vers l'azur,
Il expire en chantant sur la tige séchée.

For the word "encolure" we have no English equivalent; it means the line of the neck and shoulder—sometimes the general appearance or shape of the body.

"When in the ripening grain field not a single ear of wheat moves; when in the beaming heat the corn seems to crackle; when the poppy languishes and bends down under the feeble burden of its scarlet corolla,

"Then all the birds of the air have hushed their songs; even the indolent doves, seeking the darkest part of the foliage in the tree, have become drowsy in the woods, and have ceased their cooing, far from the fields, which the silent sun is burning.

"Nevertheless, in the wheat, the brave grasshoppers uttering their thousand sounds, a trumpet flourish of summer, have continued furiously and unceasingly to smite their wings upon the brass of their wild cymbal.

"Quivering as they stand upon the long gold ears of the grain, master musicians who must die before the coming of Fall, they sound to heaven their monotonous hymn, which re-echoes even in the darkness of the night.

"And nothing will check their inexhaustible shrilling. When chased away from the oats and from the wheat, they will migrate to the scorched bushes which die of thirst in the wastes of sand.

"Upon the leafless shrubs, upon the dried-up thistles, which let their white hair fall and float away, there the sturdily-built insect can be seen again, filled with enthusiasm, ever more and more excited as he cries,

"Until, at last, opening his wings, now rent into shreds, exasperated, burning more and more fiercely in the frenzy of his excitement, and with his eyes of bronze always fixed motionlessly upon the azure sky, he dies in his song upon the withered grain."

This is difficult to translate at all satisfactorily, owing to the multitude of images compressed together. But the idea expressed is a fine one—the courage of the insect challenging the sun, and only chanting more and more as the

heat and the thirst increase. The poem has, if you like, the fault of exaggeration, but the colour and music are very fine; and even the exaggeration itself has the merit of making the image more vivid.

It will not be necessary to quote another text; we shall scarcely have the time; but I want to translate to you something of another poem upon the same insect by the modern French poet Jean Aicard. In this poem, as in the little poem by Gautier, which I quoted to you, the writer puts his thought in the mouth of the insect, so to say—that is, makes the insect tell its own story:—

"I am the impassive and noble insect that sings in the summer solstice from the dazzling dawn all the day long in the fragrant pine-wood. And my song is always the same, regular as the equal course of the season and of the sun. I am the speech of the hot and beaming sun, and when the reapers, weary of heaping the sheaves together, lie down in the lukewarm shade, and sleep and pant in the ardour of noonday—then more than at any other time do I utter freely and joyously that double-echoing strophe with which my whole body vibrates. And when nothing else moves in all the land round about, I palpitate and loudly sound my little drum. Otherwise the sunlight triumphs; and in the whole landscape nothing is heard but my cry,—like the joy of the light itself.

"Like a butterfly I take up from the hearts of the flowers that pure water which the night lets fall into them like tears. I am inspired only by the almighty sun. Socrates listened to me; Virgil made mention of me. I am the insect especially beloved by the poets and by the bards. The ardent sun reflects himself in the globes of my eyes. My ruddy bed, which seems to be powdered like the surface of fine ripe fruit, resembles some exquisite key-board of silver and gold, all quivering with music. My four wings, with their delicate net-work of nerves, allow the bright down upon my black back to be seen through their transparency. And like a star upon the forehead of some divinely inspired

poet, three exquisitely mounted rubies glitter upon my head."

These are fair examples of the French manner of treating the interesting subject of insects in poetry. If you should ask me whether the French poems are better than the English, I should answer, "In point of workmanship, yes;—in point of feeling, no." The real value of such examples to the student should be emotional, not descriptive. I think that the Japanese poems on insects, though not comparable in point of mere form with some of the foreign poems which I have quoted, are better in another way—they come nearer to the true essence of poetry. For the Japanese poets have taken the subject of insects chiefly for the purpose of suggesting human emotion; and that is certainly the way in which such a subject should be used. Remember that this is an age in which we are beginning to learn things about insects which could not have been even imagined fifty years ago, and the more that we learn about these miraculous creatures, the more difficult does it become for us to write poetically about their lives, or about their possible ways of thinking and feeling. Probably no mortal man will ever be able to imagine how insects think or feel or hear or even see. Not only are their senses totally different from those of animals, but they appear to have a variety of special senses about which we cannot know anything at all. As for their existence, it is full of facts so atrocious and so horrible as to realize most of the imaginations of old about the torments of hell. Now, for these reasons to make an insect speak in poetry—to put one's thoughts, so to speak, into the mouth of an insect—is no longer consistent with poetical good judgment. No; we must think of insects either in relation to the mystery of their marvellous lives, or in relation to the emotion which their sweet and melancholy music makes within our minds. The impressions produced by hearing the shrilling of crickets at night or by hearing the storm of cicadae in summer woods—those impressions, indeed, are admirable subjects for poetry, and will continue to be for all time.

When I lectured to you long ago about Greek and English poems on insects, I told you that nearly all the English poems on the subject were quite modern. I still believe that I was right in this statement, as a general assertion; but I have found one quaint poem about a grasshopper, which must have been written about the middle of the seventeenth century or, perhaps a little earlier. The date of the author's birth and death are respectively 1618 and 1658. His name, I think, you are familiar with—Richard Lovelace, author of many amatory poems, and of one especially famous song, "To Lucasta, on going to the Wars"—containing the celebrated stanza—

Yet this inconstancy is such
As thou too shalt adore;
I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
Loved I not Honour more.

Well, as I said, this man wrote one pretty little poem on a grasshopper, which antedates most of the English poems on insects, if not all of them.

THE GRASSHOPPER

O thou that swing'st upon the waving hair
Of some well-fillèd oaten beard,
Drunk every night with a delicious tear
Dropt thee from heaven, where now thou wert rear'd!

The joys of earth and air are thine entire,
That with thy feet and wings dost hop and fly;
And when thy poppy works, thou dost retire
To thy carved acorn-bed to lie.

Up with the day, the Sun thou welcom'st then,
Sport'st in the gilt plaits of his beams,
And all these merry days mak'st merry men,
Thyself, and melancholy streams.

A little artificial, this poem written at least two hundred and fifty years ago; but it is pretty in spite of its artifice. Some of the conceits are so quaint that they must be explained. By the term "oaten beard," the poet means an

ear of oats; and you know that the grain of this plant is furnished with very long hair, so that many poets have spoken of the bearded oats. You may remember in this connection Tennyson's phrase "the bearded barley" in "The Lady of Shalott," and Longfellow's term "bearded grain" in his famous poem about the Reaper Death. When a person's beard is very thick, we say in England to-day "a full beard," but in the time of Shakespeare they used to say "a well-filled beard"—hence the phrase in the second line of the first stanza.

In the third line the term "delicious tear" means dew,—which the Greeks called the tears of the night, and sometimes the tears of the dawn; and the phrase "drunk with dew" is quite Greek—so we may suspect that the author of this poem had been reading the Greek Anthology. In the third line of the second stanza the word "poppy" is used for sleep—a very common simile in Elizabethan times, because from the poppy flower was extracted the opiate which enables sick persons to sleep. The Greek authors spoke of poppy sleep. "And when thy poppy works," means, when the essence of sleep begins to operate upon you, or more simply, when you sleep. Perhaps the phrase about the "carved acorn-bed" may puzzle you; it is borrowed from the fairy-lore of Shakespeare's time, when fairies were said to sleep in little beds carved out of acorn shells; the simile is used only by way of calling the insect a fairy creature. In the second line of the third stanza you may notice the curious expression about the "gilt plaits" of the sun's beams. It was the custom in those days, as it still is in these, for young girls to plait their long hair; and the expression "gilt plaits" only means braided or plaited golden hair. This is perhaps a Greek conceit; for classic poets spoke of the golden hair of the Sun God as illuminating the world. I have said that the poem is a little artificial, but I think you will find it pretty, and even the whimsical similes are "precious" in the best sense.

CHAPTER XXII

OLD GREEK POETRY ABOUT INSECTS

THE subject which I have chosen for to-day's lecture might seem to you rather remote from the topic of English literature—at least, from the topic of English literature as taught in Japan. Here the Chinese language represents in your long course of studies, what Greek and Latin represent to the English student. But in England or in any advanced European country, the subject would not be remote from the study of the native literature, because that is carried on from first to last upon a classical foundation. Any good Greek scholar knows something about the Greek poetry on the subject of insects, and knows how to use that poetry in composition of his own. So I think that this departure from our routine work is quite justified and I believe that you will find the subject interesting.

Last year, when lecturing about Keats' poems, I remarked to you that he was one of the very few English poets who wrote about singing insects—I refer, of course, to his poem on the cricket. Most modern European poetry is barren on the subject of crickets, cicadae and insects generally—with the exception of butterflies and bees. Tennyson indeed has given attention to dragon-flies and other insects. But, as a rule, it is not to European poetry of modern times that we can look for anything of interesting kind in regard to musical insects. We must go back to the old Greek civilization for that. You know that the old Greeks were endowed far beyond any modern races of the West: their literature, their arts, their conception of life have never been equalled in later times, and probably will not be equalled again for thousands of years. And it should be interesting

to the Japanese student of literature to know that his own people accord with the old Greeks in their appreciation of insect music as one of the great charms of country life.

Most of the Greek poems about insects are to be found in what is called "The Greek Anthology." Besides the distinct works of Greek authors which have come down to us, there have been preserved collections of very short poems—collections of which were made by the Greeks themselves, or by Greek scholars of a later day, many centuries ago. None of these collections are complete: a great deal has been lost —to the eternal regret of all lovers of poetry. But what we have represents an immense variety of little poems upon an immense variety of subjects; and among these are a number of poems about insects. To-day I want to quote some of these to you, in an English prose translation. There are many poetical translations also; but no modern poet can reproduce the real charm of the Greek verse—therefore it is just as well that we should read only the plain prose.

The greater number of these poems are between 2000 and 2500 years old. Some of them were composed in cities that no longer exist; some of them were written by persons whose names have been lost for ever—this makes them all the more precious. They show us, too, how very much like modern human nature was the human nature of those vanished people. And they show us also that there were many points of resemblance in the old Greek and in the Japanese character.

It is possible that the Greeks used to keep insects in cages for the pleasure of hearing them sing. We have in the first "Idyl" of Theocritus a description of a boy, taking charge of a vineyard to protect the grapes from the foxes, and occupying his time by "plaiting a pretty locust-cage with stalks of asphodel, and fitting it with reeds." Also we have in one of the poems of Meleager a reference to the feeding of crickets with leeks cut up very small—which would seem to show that the experience of Greeks and Japanese in the feeding of certain kinds of insects was

much the same. A leek, you know, is a kind of small onion, and the soft inner part of a similar plant is used in Tokyo to-day by insect feeders. The poems refer principally to cicadae, musical grasshoppers and some kinds of night crickets, and these three classes of musical insects correspond tolerably well to three classes of Japanese musical insects. But, whereas in Japan the sound made by the *semi* is considered to be too loud in most cases to be musical, it is especially the cicada that is celebrated in the Greek poem. This fact would not, however, indicate a real difference in the musical taste of the two races; it would rather indicate a difference in the species of the insect. Probably the Greek *semi* were much less noisy than their relations in the Far East. But, at the same time, perhaps the most beautiful of all the Greek poems about insects is a poem about a night cricket. It is attributed to Meleager—one of the sweetest singers of the late Greek literature.

> O thou cricket, that cheatest me of my regrets, the soother of slumber!
>
> O thou cricket, that art the Muse of the ploughed fields, and art with shrill wings the self-formed imitation of the lyre, chirrup me something pleasant, while beating thy vocal wings with thy feet. How I wish, O cricket, that thou wouldst release me from the troubles of much sleepless care, weaving the thread of a voice that causes Love to wander away! And I will give thee for morning-gifts leek ever fresh, and drops of dew cut up small for thy mouth.

The great beauty of this little piece is in the line about weaving the thread of a voice. Listening to the charm of the insect's song at night the poet is able to forget his troubles. The expression, "thread of a voice," exquisitely represents what we would call to-day the "thin" quality of the little creature's song. It is also evident that the Greeks observed such insects very closely, and noticed how their music was made. The cricket is correctly described as

striking its wings with its feet. But in the cicada the stridulatory organ is not in the wings, but in the breast; and the old poets observed this fact also.

It would also appear that Greek children kept insects as pets, and made little graves for them when they died, just as one sees Japanese children doing to-day. Here is a little poem 2600 years old, written by a Greek girl of Sicily, a poetress named Anyté. It is the epitaph of a locust and a tettix—by which word we may understand cicada:

> For a locust, the nightingale amongst ploughed fields, and for the tettix, whose bed is in the oak, did Myro make a common tomb, after the damsel had dropt a maiden tear; for Hades, hard to be persuaded, had gone away, taking with him her two playthings.

How freshly do the tears of this little girl still shine to-day—after the passing of 2600 years! There is another poem on the very same subject, by a later poet in the "Anthology," also celebrating the grief of Myro.

> For a locust and a tettix has Myro placed this monument, after throwing upon both a little dust with her hands, and weeping affectionately at the funeral pyre; for Hades had carried off the male songster, and Proserpine the other.

But if little girls in old Greece were so tender-hearted as this, I am sorry to tell you that little boys were not. They caught cicadae much as little boys in Tokyo to-day catch *semi*, and they were not very merciful—if we can judge from the following poem, intended to represent the death song of a cicada.

> No longer rolling myself over the level part of a bough with long leaves shall I delight myself, by singing out the song from my quick-moving wings; for I have fallen into the savage hand of a boy, who seized me unexpectedly, as I was sitting under the green leaves.

You must know that the cicada received religious respect in some parts of Greece;—it was believed to be the favourite insect of the Goddess of Wisdom, and it was often represented in statues of the Goddess. I do not mean that the Greeks worshipped it, but they had many religious traditions concerning it. At one time the Athens women used to wear cicadae of gold in their hair; and this ornament was afterwards adopted by Roman ladies. As for the merits of the insect we have a very curious little poem in which it is celebrated as a favourite of the Gods:

> We deem thee happy, O cicada, because, having drunk, like a king, a little dew, thou dost chirrup on the top of trees. For all those things are thine, whatsoever thou seest in the fields, and whatever the seasons produce. Yet thou art a friend of land-tillers, to no one doing any harm. Thou art held in honour by mortals, as the pleasant harbinger of summer. The Muses love thee. Phœbus himself loves thee, and has gifted thee with a shrill song. And old age does not wear thee down. Oh thou clever one, earth-born, song-loving, without suffering, having flesh without blood, thou art nearly equal to the gods.

Another poet speaks more definitely about the relation of the insect to the Goddess of Wisdom—putting his words into the mouth of the insect.

> Not only sitting upon lofty trees do I know how to sing, warmed with the great heat of summer, an unpaid minstrel to wayfaring men, and sipping the vapour of dew, that is like woman's milk. But even upon the spear of Athené with her beautiful helmet will you see me, the Tettix, seated. For as much as we are loved by the Muses, by so much is Athené by us. For the virgin has established a prize for melody.

Meleager also celebrates the tettix:

> Thou vocal Tettix, drunk with drops of dew, thou singest the Muse, that lives in the country, thou dost

> prattle in the desert; and sitting with thy serrated limbs on the tops of petals, thou givest out the melody of the lyre with thy dusky skin. Come thou, O friend, and speak some new playful thing to the Wood-Nymphs, and chirrup a strain responsive to Pan, in order that, after flying from Love, I may find midday sleep here, reclining under a shady plane-tree.

But the most remarkable poem about a cicada in the whole Greek collection is a little piece 2300 years old, attributed to the poet Evenus. It was written upon the occasion of seeing a nightingale catch a cicada. Evenus calls the nightingale "Attic Maiden"—because in Greek mythology the nightingale was a daughter of an ancient king of Attica; her name was Philomela, and she was turned into a bird by the gods out of pity for her great sorrow.

This is the poem:

> Thou, Attic maiden, honey-fed, hast chirping seized a chirping Cicada, and bearest it to thy unfledged young, thou a twitterer the twitterer, thou the winged the well-winged, thou a stranger the stranger, thou a summer child the summer child! Wilt thou not quickly throw it away? For it is not right, it is not just, that those engaged in song should perish by the mouths of those engaged in song.

This poem has been put into English verse by several hands. Most of the verse translations are very disappointing; but in this case one translation happens to be tolerably good so that we may quote it:—

> Honey-nurtured Attic maiden,
> Wherefore to thy brood dost wing
> With the shrill Cicada laden?
> 'Tis like thee a prattling thing.
> 'Tis, a sojourner and stranger,
> And a summer-child, like thee;
> 'Tis, like thee, a winged ranger
> Of the air's immensity.
> From thy bill this instant fling her;

'Tis not proper, just, or good,
That a little ballad-singer
Should be kill'd for singer's food.

Another ancient poem represents the insect caught in a spider's web and crying there until the poet himself came to the rescue.

> A spider having woven its thin web with its slim feet caught a tettix, hampered in the intricate net. I did not, however, on seeing the young thing that loves music, run by it, while (it was) making a lament in the thin fetters; but freeing it from the net I relieved it, and spoke to it thus—"Be free, thou, who singest with a musical noise."

Like the poets of the Far East, the Greek singers especially celebrated the harmlessness of the cicada. We have already had one example in the poem beginning "We deem thee happy, etc." by the great poet Anacreon. Here is another very old composition of which the authorship is not kown.

> Why, O shepherds, do ye drag by a harmless captivity from dewy boughs, me a Cicada, the lover of solitude, the road-side songster of the Nymphs, chirping shrilly in mid-day heat on the mountains, and in the shady groves. Behold the thrush and blackbird, behold how many startlings are the plunderers of field-abundance. It is right to take the destroyers of fruits. Kill them. What grudging is there of leaves and grassy dew?

Occasionally too we find the Greek poet like the Japanese, compassionating the insects of autumn, and lamenting for their death. The following example is said to have been composed by an ancient writer called Mnasalcas:

> No more with wings shrill-sounding shalt thou sing, O locust, along the fertile furrows settling; nor me reclining under the shady foliage shalt thou delight, striking, with dusky wings, a pleasant melody.

By the word "locust" here is probably meant a kind of musical grasshopper—of the same class of insects which are so common in this country. In England and in America the word "locust" commonly refers to an insect frequenting trees rather than grass. We may now attempt a few remarks upon the social signification of this old Greek poetry, and its charming suggestion of refined sensibility and kindness.

You will not find Roman poets writing about insects—at least not until a very late day, and then only in imitation of the Greeks. This little fact, insignificant as it may seem, serves an illustration of the vast difference in the character of the two races. Grand in many respects the Romans were as splendid soldiers, matchless architects, excellent rulers, and they had all the qualities of power and foresight, and executive ability. But at no time did they ever reach the standard of old Greek refinement—none even after they had been studying Greek literature and philosophy for hundreds of years. Something of the savage and the ferocious always remains in Roman character—which finally developed into the most monstrous forms of cruelty that the world has ever known, the cruelty of an age when the greatest pleasure of life was the spectacle of death. On the other hand even in the times of their degradation under Roman rule, the Greeks could not be coldly cruel. They resisted the introduction of the Roman games into their civilization; they opposed, whenever it was possible, the sentiment of humanity and pity to gladiatory shows. A people who enjoyed to see men killing each other for sport could not have written poems about insects. And a people that wrote poems about insects could not find pleasure in cruelty.

Indeed I think that the capacity to enjoy the music of insects and all that it signifies in the great poem of Nature, tells very plainly of goodness of heart, aesthetic sensibility, a perfectly healthy state of mind. All this the Greeks certainly had. What mostly impresses us in the tone of their literature, in the feeling of their art, in the charm of

their conception of life, is the great joyousness of the Greek nature,—a joyousness fresh as that of a child—combined with a power of deep thinking in which it had no rival. These old Greeks, though happy as children and as kindly, were very great philosophers, to whom we go for instruction even at this day. What the world now most feels in is the return of that old Greek spirit of happiness and of kindness. We can think deeply enough; but all our thinking only serves, it would seem, to darken our lives instead of brightening them.

Now, as I have said before, there was very much in the old Greek life that resembled the old Japanese life; and there was certainly in old Japan a certain joy, of which the Western world can show no parallel in modern times. We should have to go back to the Greek times for that. Were some great classic scholar, perfectly familiar with the manners and customs of this country, to make a literary study of the parallel between Greek and Japanese life and thought, I am sure that the result would be as surprising as it would be charming. Although the two religions present great differences, the religious spirit offers a great many extraordinary resemblances. It was not only in writing about insects that the Greek poets came close to the Japanese poets: they came close to them also in thousands of little touches of an emotional kind referreing to the gods, the fate of man, the pleasure of the festival days, those sorrows of existence also, which have been the same in all ages of humanity. I wonder if you remember a little poem in the *Man-yo-shu,* attributed to a Japanese poet named Okura, in which, lamenting the death of his little son, he begs that the porter of the underworld will carry the little ghost upon his shoulder because the boy is too little to walk so far. Is it not strange to find a Greek poet writing the very same thing thousands of years ago? The Greek poet was called Zonas of Sardis by some writers, by others he was called Diodorus,—his poem is addressed to the boatman who ferries the souls of men over the river of death.

> Do thou, who rowest the boat of the dead in the water of this lake, full of reeds, for Hades, having a painful task, stretch out, dark Charon, thy hand to the son of Cinyras, as he mounts on the ladder by the gang-way, and receive him. *For his sandals will cause the lad to slip about; and he fears to put his feet naked on the sand of the shore.*

Again, just as it is the custom for little Japanese girls to make offerings of their dolls and toys to some divinity, in various parts of the country, so we find little Greek poems written to celebrate the doing of the same thing by Greek girls ages before any modern European language had taken shape. The poet says in one of these:—

> Timareté before her marriage has offered up her tambourine, and her valued ball, and her dolls, and her dolls' dresses to the Goddess. And do thou, Oh Goddess, place thy hand over the girl Timareté, and preserve holily her who thus devotes herself unto thee.

Hundreds of examples of this kind might be quoted. I mention them only by way of suggestion.

At the beginning of this essay I remarked to you on the absence of poems about insects in the modern literature of the West. Of course such absence means that the Western people have not yet perceived, much less understood, certain very beautitul sides of nature,—in spite of their study of the Greek poets. There may be reasons for this of another kind than you might at first suppose. It would not be just to say that Western people are deficient in aesthetic and ethical sensibility,—though they have not yet reached the Greek standard in that respect. It is not want of feeling; it is rather, I think, inability to consider nature in the largest and best way, because of the restraints that the Christian religion has long placed upon Western thought. Christianity gave souls only to men,—not to animals or to insects. Familiarity with animals, however, compels men to recognize animal in-

telligence even while not daring to contradict the opinion of the Church.

Familiarity with insects, however, could not be obtained in the same way, nor have the like result. Even when men could recognize the spirit of a horse or the affectionate intelligence of a dog, they would still, under the influence of the old teaching, think only of insects as automata. In modern times, science has taught them better; but I am speaking of popular hymn. On the other hand the philosopher of the Far East, teaching the unity of all life, would impel men to interest themselves in all living creatures,—just as did the Greek teaching that all forms of life had souls. One thing certainly strikes me as being very interesting. The few modern writers, in France and in England, who write about insect music, are men troubled by the mystery of the universe—men who have faced the great problems of Oriental thought, and whose ears are therefore open to all the whisper of nature.

CHAPTER XXIII

ON FLOWERS IN ENGLISH POETRY

LAST year I gave a lecture upon the English poetry of trees, and promised afterwards a lecture upon the poetry of flowers. The subjects are, of course, quite distinct. Although the word "flower" is sometimes loosely used in English prose to signify "plant," I am using it only in the signification of "blossom," which is the right meaning.

You probably know that poems upon this subject exist in every literature of the world—even in the oral, or unwritten, songs of barbarous peoples, and that it is a very large subject. In English alone the poetical literature of flowers would form an immense book. We cannot hope to cover the whole topic; and that will be of no use. We shall only attempt to study selections from the most beautiful poems about flowers; and, in doing this, I think we shall find it difficult to arrange the subject according to Western, not according to Eastern, ways. For the flowers which are loved in the West and in the East are not the same,—nor are they admired or celebrated for exactly the same reasons, nor are they associated with the same class of aesthetic ideas. Moreover, it may be said, in a general way, that in the East the natural or wild flowers are commonly admired by poets rather than the artificial variety—notwithstanding some exceptions. In Western countries, and especially in England, the flowers described by poets have been for the most part garden-flowers,—artificial flowers. Again there are exceptions here, but I think we can state with tolerable accuracy, that the English poetry of wild flowers is nearly all modern—belongs to the period of the nature sentiment in poetry, which began with Thomson. Before Thomson

there was some sentiment on the subject, but it was not representative of any general feeling. One thing more, I hope that you will not think the interest in artificial flowers more really aesthetic than that in wild flowers. In this case we know through the science of botany that wild flowers are incomparably more interesting than cultivated flowers. The modern tendency to prefer the wild flower as a poetical subject is a current tendency. The cultivated flower, however beautiful it may seem, is really a kind of monster;—and the proof is that cultivated flowers very quickly return to the state of wild flowers unless they are constantly cared for by the gardener.

According to Western ideas the rose would be first in rank among poetical flower subjects—and this preference England shares with India and with Persia as well as with the rest of Europe. Perhaps we may say that the lily ranks next to the rose in poetry—a fact partially explained by the religious association of the flower. It has almost as much symbolic value in the West as the lotus in the East—almost, but not altogether. The third place we should give to the violet. Taking these three flowers first, we will find much interest in matters about them in relation to Western idealism.

And not only in relation to poetry proper, but to aesthetic ideas in general. For example you know that in all countries it is a custom to name girls after beautiful things. Sometimes the beauty expressed in a name is only physical; but more generally it is moral;—and I think that in Europe, as well as in Japan, most of the aesthetic names given to women were originally given for moral rather than aesthetic reasons. With the passing of time the aesthetic signification of a name became more obvious than the moral one; but I think that the history of aesthetic names in the East and West is very much the same. Flowers signify virtues as well as colours and perfume. The lily has long been an emblem of purity and innocence; the violet an emblem of modesty; the sun flower an emblem of loving fidelity. The moral significations are meant and a large number of these

significations certainly appear in the flower names given to English girls, as well as in the similar use of certain plant names.

But all names are not so easily explained. The use of the flower name Rose is considerably older than existing English moral symbolism. We can trace it back to the old Greek civilization, when it meant only the Rosy-cheek. Also the female name Violet is very deceiving. The meaning appears so obvious to-day!—yet, curiously enough, before Christianity the violet flower was sacred to the Scandinavian God Týr,—and was placed in the hands of the bride upon her marriage table, for reasons having nothing to do with timid modesty. So we must not jump at conclusions about the meaning of flowers as symbols, without carefully looking at the history of each. Suffice it to say that in our own time the signification of flower names is both moral and aesthetic—whatever it may have been in times past.

And now we shall begin with the literature of the rose.

The relation of the rose to poetry is very largely owing to the decorative and social usage of the flower. Of course the rose is the artificial—not the wild rose. This flower has been especially cultivated for the usage to which it has been put. And it is decorative in use, not for its colour—not because it is red: on the contrary white roses and yellow roses and roses of many different colours are in vogue and have been so for centuries. Except blue roses (which are regarded as impossible to produce) there is scarcely any colour which cannot be found in English roses. The charm of the flower to English taste is especially in the form and the perfume. Therefore women use it as an ornament,—wearing it sometimes in the hair, sometimes in the bosom of the girl; and I need scarcely say that for these reasons it especially interests love-poets. So universal is the Western custom of wearing flowers in the hair that I remember a case in which one learned foreign traveller could not be made to believe that flowers were not thus used by Japanese women. He had seen pictures, he said, of Japanese girls

with beautiful flowers in their hair. On being told that these were artificial flowers, not natural ones, he appeared to think that his informants were stating something absurd, because if artificial flowers were used why not flowers from the garden? And coming to think it over, the gentleman's opinion was reasonable enough. Really it is hard to understand why living flowers have not been more used in this country as ornaments for the hair.

Now you know that since flowers are thus used throughout Europe, presents of beautiful flowers have naturally become gifts of etiquette. Present her with garden flowers of a particular kind; and she may find better use for them than merely putting them into a glass of water. She may make them a part of her toilette. It is the custom also that a lady should sometimes favour her admirer (of course there are rules to be observed) with a present of one flower that she has worn in her hair or upon her dress. Such a gift is a proof of trust and esteem—sometimes it may be a proof of affection. Two beautiful poems which I am going to quote for you will illustrate both usages of the rose as a gift. The first poem is about a rose which the gentleman is sending to the lady that he loves, but who does not love him in return. The poem is about three hundred years old, but it is as fresh in its beauty as a flower but just plucked from the garden. The author is Edmund Waller.

Go, lovely Rose!
Tell her that wastes her time and me,
That now she knows,
When I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young,
And shuns to have her graces spy'd,
That hadst thou sprung
In deserts where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired:

Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.

Then die! that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee,—
How small a part of time they share
That are so wondrous sweet and fair.

The little story is plain. The young girl is either too shy to give her lover any hope, or she does not care for him. Then he sends her the gift of a rose, accompanied by the poem which may be paraphrased thus:—

"Go to her now, my beautiful rose. She is wasting her own pleasant time for you and she is also wasting mine, because she will not say either yes or no. She does not know how much I love her;—but you can speak to her for me, and when she sees how beautiful you are, and when she hears that I compare her to you—then she will be able to imagine how fair and sweet I think her.

"She is very young—perhaps that is why she is so much ashamed to hear of admiration, or to meet admiring eyes. But tell her that if you, my rose, had grown in the solitude of the desert, where no man lives, then you would have died without ever hearing a word of praise.

"Tell her that the beauty which no one sees must be even as if it had no value. Tell her to come out from her chamber, into the light and life of society,—and let men honorably seek her,—to conquer her needless shame of being justly admired.

"And then die—in order that she may be reminded by you, by your death, of the impermanency of all beauty of an unstable character, of everything precious and exquisite. Remind her that the most charming thing, the most wonderful thing, can exist only for a very little time—whether beautiful maidens or beautiful blossoms."

They appeal in the spirit of the old Roman poets who told their sweethearts that life was short, and that it was

waste of time to delay the happiness possible through union. That was also the fashion of the age of Elizabeth, but the sentiment as expressed by Waller is very delicately hinted, and in this he resembles Shakespeare as a love-poet. There are one or two old-fashioned words only. In the fourth line of the first stanza the word "resemble" means compare; the verb "resemble" in a transitive sense is now obsolete. In the second line of the last stanza the word "common" has a larger meaning than we usually give it now—the sense of university. Wordsworth, however, uses the same meaning of the word when he speaks of the "common life," i.e. the universal radius, of the song.

The rose of the second poem is perhaps the flower that had been worn in the hair or on the bosom. It is by Mrs. Browning; and perhaps there is not any poem about a rose more beautiful than this. You may often see in English books some pathetic references to withered flowers—old love gifts, or memories of dead promises. Such flowers are commonly kept pressed between the leaves of a book—indeed, this is almost the only way of preserving them:—

A DEAD ROSE

O Rose! who dares to name thee?
No longer roseate now, nor soft, nor sweet;
But pale, and hard, and dry, as stubble-wheat,—
Kept seven years in a drawer—thy titles shame thee.

The breeze that used to blow thee
Between the hedge-row thorns, and take away
An odour up the lane to last all day,—
If breathing now,—unsweeten'd would forego thee.

The sun that used to smite thee,
And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn,
Till beam appear'd to bloom, and flower to burn,—
If shining now,—with not a hue would light thee.

The dew that used to wet thee,
And, white first, grow incarnadined, because

It lay upon thee when the crimson was,—
  If dropping now,—would darken where it met thee.

  The fly that lit upon thee,
To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet,
Along thy leaf's pure edges, after heat,—
  If lighting now,—would coldly overrun thee.

  The bee that once did suck thee,
And build thy perfumed ambers up his hive,
And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce alive,—
  If passing now,—would blindly overlook thee.

  The heart doth recognize thee,
Alone, alone! The heart doth smell thee sweet,
Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee most complete,—
  Though seeing now those changes that disguise thee.

In this poem the red rose is meant—but if any other flower were used in place of the rose the poem would be just as beautiful. Translate it, if you like, into Japanese prose—and still it will be only a little less beautiful, because there are English words for you which could scarcely be reproduced in any other language. The thought is this: –

"O my dead rose—given to me so many years ago! How can I ever dare to call you a rose again! You are only a dry, colourless, hard, shapeless thing,—ugly and dead as the stubble in the field;—you have no colour now, nor softness, nor perfume, nor any of those charms belonging to a beautiful flower. That is because you have been kept seven years in a drawer. Ah! to think of your titles now!—for people call you Queen of Flowers, Empress of Gardens, Flower of Beauty! Indeed you now disgrace those titles.

"Long ago you grew in a hedge surrounding a garden; and when the wind blew through the hedge in summer-time it became perfumed by touching you,—and as it went up the shaded road, it carried with it that perfume, and made a sweet smell all along the way in the warm summer afternoon. But if that wind were to blow upon you now, I think

that it would try very soon to avoid you again.

"Long ago the sun shone upon you:—and when his light poured into your flower cup, it took such colour therein that it seemed as if the light had turned into blossom and the blossom into light. Which was rose, which sun, none could tell. But if the sun were now to shine upon you, never could he give you any colour.

"Long ago the dew used to fall upon you; and when it fell upon you it became like drops of blood, because of the crimson of your leaves. But if that dew were now to fall upon you, it would become black.

"Little insects used to rest upon you—used to cool themselves and rest themselves and shadow themselves among your beautiful leaves. But to-day no insect would take the slightest notice of you.

"Long ago bees went into your heart to look for honey. There they found and sucked sweetness and obtained pollen for the amber wax of their combs,—and almost fainted for delight because of your perfume and your sweetness. But no bee would even look at you now.

"My heart, and only my heart still finds you beautiful—still recognizes you and loves you as of old. To my heart your dead perfume continues as sweet as ever; to me you are still as beautiful as in former times; to me there is no ugliness, no death, no loss. With my lives indeed I see that there have been changes—but far, far beyond them—the crimson love-gift of long ago."

I might give you a hundred poems about the rose; but I think that I must content myself with two more; for we cannot spare too much space to one flower. Here is a little song by the present poet laureate, Alfred Austin. I think I have told you before that he is not a great poet—in spite of being poet laureate: indeed he has written scarcely anything of real value. Nevertheless, you ought to know that one of the very few good things which he did write happens to be about a rose. He is addressing somebody as Wild Rose—a common name for an English

girl and he plays very prettily with the fancy.

A WILD ROSE

The first wild rose in wayside hedge,
  This year I wandering see,
I pluck, and send it as a pledge,
  My own Wild Rose, to thee.

For when my gaze first met thy gaze,
  We were knee-deep in June:
The nights were only dreamier days,
  And all the hours in tune.

I found thee, like the eglantine,
  Sweet, simple, and apart;
And, from that hour, thy smile hath been
  The flower that scents my heart.

And, ever since, when tendrils grace
  Young copse or weathered bole
With rosebuds, straight I see thy face,
  And gaze into thy soul.

A natural bud of love thou art,
  Where, gazing down, I view,
Deep hidden in thy fragrant heart,
  A drop of heavenly dew.

Go, wild rose, to my Wild Rose dear;
  Bid her come swift and soon.
O would that She were always here!
  It then were always June.

There is a pretty play upon the word "wild" in the fourth line of the first stanza and in the first line of the last stanza. "Wild" is often used in the sense of "playfully mischievous;" when speaking of children and young girls, it is used in a caressing sense, as I think the Japanese word for "mischievous" can be, on occasion. In the second line of the second stanza the phrase "knee-deep in June" means really "standing up to our knees in the grass and flowers of midsummer." June, in England, is particularly the month of

roses—at least of the red rose. When the poet sees the wild rose blowing by the roadside he thinks immediately of his first meeting with the woman to whom the poem is addressed. When he says that the nights were only "dreamier days," he means that those nights of midsummer long ago were so bright with moonlight and starlight that they seem not real nights, but only sleepy-looking days. "All the hours in tune" means that all the time was happy because of the harmony of feeling between the lovers. You know the wild rose, or eglantine, is a creeping plant—not a strong bush, and it climbs round trees. "Weathered bole" means storm-beaten, or weather-beaten, trunk of the tree. Whenever the poet sees a wild rose in the country, climbing above a tree, he remembers the face of the girl, and he seems to be looking again into her eyes, delighted by the innocence and frankness of her gaze. "You are indeed like a rose," he exclaims; "and in your heart, like the dew in a rose, there is the clearness and beauty of heavenly grace." It is a pretty poem, though not great: only a great poet can do great things with flowers. Now Keats was a great poet. A friend sent him some roses one day; and he sent in return to this friend, whose name was Wells, a little poem which as poetry is much finer than the verses of Alfred Austin—though the subject is far less interesting:—

TO A FRIEND WHO SENT ME SOME ROSES

As late I rambled in the happy fields,
  What time the sky-lark shakes the tremulous dew
  From his lush clover covert;—when anew
Adventurous knights take up their dinted shields:
I saw the sweetest flower wild nature yields,
  A fresh-blown musk-rose; 'twas the first that threw
  Its sweets upon the summer: graceful it grew
As is the wand that queen Titania wields.
And, as I feasted on its fragrancy,
  I thought the garden-rose it far excell'd:
But when, O Wells! thy roses came to me
  My sense with their deliciousness was spell'd:

Soft voices had they, that with tender plea
Whisper'd of peace, and truth, and friendliness unquell'd.

Paraphrased:—

"As I was walking alone in the pleasant fields early in the morning just at the time when the lark first wakens and shakes the dew from the clover leaves hiding its nest; just at the time when in ancient stories of chivalry, good knights used to wake up and take their shields and spears in hand to prepare for noble deeds,--just about that time I saw a beautiful flower. It was indeed the sweetest flower that blooms—a musk-rose, a wild musk-rose,—and the first of the season. It looked to me as beautiful as the magical flower wand of the fairy queen Titania;—and I thought to myself that such a wild flower was indeed much sweeter and more beautiful than our artificial flower. But when your roses came to me, dear friend, they completely enchanted me—and in another way. For they spoke to me, with very small sweet voices, spoke to me very tenderly, begging me not to forget you,—and reminding me of the happy quiet and the open-heartedness and the never changing strength of your affection for me."

There are a few hard words in this sonnet. In the third line from the bottom, the word "spell'd" means enchanted—laid under a spell. You know that the word "spell" is often used as a noun in the sense of charm, witchcraft; but it is scarcely ever used as a verb: only a daring poet like Keats could use it with success. In the third line from the top, notice the words "lush" and "covert." Lush—a word powerfully used by Tennyson in "A Dream of Fair Women"—means growing richly and strongly, showing vigour or rankness of vegetable life:—

And at the root thro' lush green grasses burn'd
The red anemone.*

"Lush green" or "lush clover" means clover strongly and

* Lines 71-2

vigorously growing. "Covert" means hiding place—the word is used chiefly in reference to animals and birds. Lastly, I may remind you, Titania is the name of the Queen of the Fairies in the beautiful fairy play of Shakespeare, "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The charm of this sonnet by Keats is principally in the last two lines; suggesting the way that the simplest gift seems to speak to the heart with a little fairy voice of his own.

Now I am going to speak of other flowers. I should like to talk to you about mystical poems on roses. There is an astonishing one by Robert Browning entitled "Women and Roses." There are two by an Irish poet called Yeats—one entitled "The Rose of Peace" and the other "The Rose of the World." I quoted one last year—in a lecture on love poems. But these compositions are a little too difficult for the general class; they would require days of explanation. However, I shall say something about the Rose of Heaven at the conclusion of this lecture.

For the present let us talk about lilies and violets.

As the rose is especially a flower of love, the lily is especially a flower of virtue;—and among the virtues is particularly represented chastity in the symbolism of the middle ages. So "the Mother of God," Mary the Virgin, was called a white lily—as in the charming verse of Rossetti:—

> An angel-watered lily, that near God
> Grows and is quiet.*

She was also called the "Mystical Rose;"—but the angels and the saints and the virgins in pictures of heaven are commonly represented with lilies, not with roses. Altogether we may say that the lily is the most religious of Western flowers—particularly the white lily; and that is why many girls are called by the name of that flower. But there are lilies and lilies. You have heard of the "White Lilies of France." Do you know that in old French time the banners of France bore white lilies? They represented the royal

* *Mary's Girlhood*

power and state. Did you ever notice the shape of those lilies in the pictures? The French lilies were not like the lilies in religious art, not exactly. They rather resembled a figure like this . Now this heraldic lily reminds us not of the garden lilies, having a cup-shaped flower; but it does look something like a Japanese iris—a plant that is very beautiful and whose blossoming forms one of the flower seeing sights of Tokyo. In a certain sense it is a kind of lily: all true lilies belong to the great family of grasses. The French Royal Lily was really an ideal iris—though always known by the name fleur-de-lis, i.e. lily-flower. The word was corrupted into the name "flower-de-luce." I have no doubt that a stranger visiting the great iris display at Tokyo and not knowing the Japanese name of the beautiful plants exhibited would call them off hand by this name. We have one very fine poem on this flower, by Longfellow—and it is perhaps the best on the subject in the English tongue. It is worth quoting in full.

FLOWER-DE-LUCE

Beautiful lily, dwelling by still rivers,
    Or solitary mere,
Or where the sluggish meadow-brook delivers
    Its waters to the weir!

Thou laughest at the mill, the whir and worry
    Of spindle and of loom,
And the great wheel that toils amid the hurry
    And rushing of the flume.

Born in the purple, born to joy and pleasance,
    Thou dost not toil nor spin,
But makest glad and radiant with thy presence
    The meadow and the lin.

The wind blows, and uplifts thy drooping banner,
    And round thee throng and run
The rushes, the green yeomen of thy manor,
    The outlaws of the sun.

The burnished dragon-fly is thine attendant,
    And tilts against the field,

And down the listed sunbeam rides resplendent
With steel-blue mail and shield.

Thou art the Iris, fair among the fairest,
Who, armed with golden rod
And winged with the celestial azure, bearest
The message of some God.

Thou art the Muse, who far from crowded cities
Hauntest the sylvan streams,
Playing on pipes of reed the artless ditties
That come to us as dreams.

O flower-de-luce, bloom on, and let the river
Linger to kiss thy feet!
O flower of song, bloom on, and make forever
The world more fair and sweet.

This poem, though not requiring much explanation, contains a few unfamiliar words. The word "weir" in the fourth line of the first stanza is one of these;—it simply means a dam, to confine the water used by a mill, or for irrigation purposes. The word "flume," in the last line in the second stanza means an artificial water-channel. The word "lin" in the last line of the third stanza is a very old word. There are no less than three different meanings for "lin"—one is a waterfall, one is a great pool or pond, and the third is a cliff, or steep place: meanings having no relation whatever each to the other. But the meaning here is certainly a pond or pool. So much for the hard words—now for other references. The reference in the third stanza to the scriptural text in which we are told that "Solomon in all his glory" was not so beautifully arrayed as the lilies of the field, that do not toil or spin,—is probably familiar to most of you.* But the allusion in the fourth stanza to the "green yeomen" and the "outlaw" is perhaps less plain. It is a suggestion of the old story of Robin Hood,—the knightly outlaw of the middle ages, who dressed his men in Lincoln green. Most of his men were really of the class of yeomen according to the tradition, though many other ranks

* See *S. Matthew*, vi. 27

were represented among them. The yeomen were of the agricultural class, with the privileges of the military class: we might call them soldier-farmers—and you know that there was a class like this in feudal Japan. The poet compares the green rushes with their spear-like leaves, surrounding the water-lily, to a band of Robin Hood's men escorting and protecting some fair lady. Next we have a wonderful stanza about the dragon-fly, in which most of the words are taken from the language in which the chivalrous sports of the middle ages are generally described. All is a suggestion of armour and of tournaments;—the dragon-fly is described like a knight in full armour; and I think you will remember that Tennyson does nearly the same thing in description, when he speaks of the "sapphire mail"* of the dragon-fly. The participial adjective "burnished" reminds us of armour rubbed bright. The expression "tilts against the field" has a double meaning; for though we are told only about a dragon-fly rushing to and fro over a field, the expression "to tilt against a field" in feudal times, meant to hold the field against all comers, i.e. to anybody.

Observe also the beautiful expression "listed sunbeam." You know that the place within which tournaments were held used to be called the "lists"; and that quaint word signifies especially the fence of barrier surrounding the fighting place. The long beams of sloping sunlight, as they pass through the leaves of the trees overhanging the water, are compared to the golden lists, or tournament barriers. Longfellow speaks of steel-blue mail, and Tennyson of sapphire mail; probably different kinds of dragon-fly were in the minds of the poets; but some kinds of sapphire are steel-blue—so the description is not very different. You all know that the Goddess Iris, the goddess of the rainbow, whose name lives in the name of the lily, was also the messenger of heaven—so the next stanza we need not explain. But the reference in the seventh stanza to the "Muse" playing on pipes of reeds is inspired by the old Greek poets, who de-

* *The Two Voices*, l. 12

scribe their sylvan gods as amusing themselves by playing upon musical instruments made out of hollow reeds, and wandering all alone on the banks of some streams. "Artless ditties" are simple melodies and songs, such as Theocritus tells us about in his "Idyl."

Poems about lilies of this standard are very few; and most of the fine things which English poets have written about lilies, are not to be found in single poems—not, at least, in poems upon a single thing. But when we come to speak of poetry about flowers in general we shall find other beautiful references. For the time being let us speak about violets.

In European child-schools as in Japanese child-schools, children are taught to sing or repeat various little poems about flowers and birds, to some of which poems or songs moral meanings are attached. The violet is a common subject; and I suppose that every English and American child thus first learned that the violet is the symbol of humility and modesty. I need not quote to you any of the child poetry; but you will do well to remember the symbolizing flower, for some reference to that symbolism is to be found in almost all English poems about violets. I will quote for you one only—but the best, in spite of its simplicity. It is by Herrick who loved flowers and wrote little songs about almost every kind of flower. Few of them, however, are so pretty as this.

TO VIOLETS

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.

As pretty as the words—though the words are few. In the first stanza the phrase "to bring in" means to introduce or to conduct: it is colloquial English and we still say, "Bring him in" or "Bring her in"—in the sense of "Please conduct the person into the room." The poet tells us that the violets are like the maids-of-honour that wait upon the spring; and you know that the term "maid-of-honour" is used of the attendant upon a queen or empress. He calls them the sweetest of all the flowers of Spring, and much more really beautiful than damask roses. But there are no roses early in the spring, at the time when the violets come; and when the roses do appear we ungratefully forget the violets. In this Herrick is right;—it requires a finer taste to appreciate a violet than to admire a rose.

No doubt the beauty and grace of the violet together with the fact that it is such a very small flower and seems to prefer shady places—would account for its association in popular fancy with girlish modesty, amiability, and innocence.

The sunflower, I have already said, is the symbol of fidelity in love. We may go back to old Greek mythology for the origin of the symbolism. In Greek mythology a maiden beloved by the God of the Sun lost his favour through her own jealousy, and was turned away and changed into the flower. And that flower always turns its face to the sun from his rising to his setting, as if following with a loving look. A very famous modern English song, or at least Irish song, which is about the same thing, contains a fine verse in allusion to this legend:—

It is not while beauty and youth are thine own,
And thy cheeks unprofaned by a tear,

That the fervour and faith of a soul can be known,
To which time will but make thee more dear;
No, the heart that has truly loved never forgets,
But as truly loves on to the close,
As the sunflower turns on to her god, when he sets
The same look which she turned when he rose.

It was written by Moore,* and exemplified the symbolism of which I spoke very effectively. But some poets have dared a higher symbolism than this, in speaking of the sunflower. Blake is an example. Among the finest of his mystic poems is the following:—

Ah, Sunflower, weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun;
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveller's journey is done;

Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale virgin shrouded in snow,
Arise from their graves, and aspire
Where my Sunflower wishes to go!

The suggestion here is on a divine and not a human love. The first part of the poem is merely explanatory. The reference to "the pale virgin shrouded in snow" implies, of course, a maiden who died of love—but why should she be spoken of as shrouded in snow?—it means that her shroud is white like snow, or that her grave is covered with snow, or that she is buried under the snow. It might be anything of this kind, and we need not try to find exactly what the poet meant in the material sense, because we know very well what he meant in the spiritual sense. Snow is a symbol of chastity and moral perfection. The suggestion in the second stanza is that even the sufferings of disappointed love in this state of existence may be aspirations after death to the love of higher things.

We need not remain longer with the violets, but consider

* In his *Irish Melodies*:—"Believe me, if all those endearing young charms" &c.

the relation of Wordsworth to the literature of flowers. Wordsworth wrote as much about flowers as Herrick did, but not at all in the same way. Herrick, although a clergyman, was in heart an old-fashioned pagan and he wrote about flowers joyously and delightfully and humanly—almost like a Greek would have written about them. But Wordsworth in spite of all his famous poems on flowers did not very much care for flowers in themselves. It was not the beauty of the flower that he studied but the effect produced by the flowers upon the imagination of himself. Sometimes the study of this effect would lead him further and deeper, —lead him to consider the flower symbolically, all the relation of nature to human life as expressed in the beauty of her flowers. His best things about flowers are, therefore, of a meditative and sometimes of a semi-religious kind, as you might suppose, and the more religious the poem the less its value as poetry. Wordsworth is best when meditative; but he is not at his best when he is religious—there is a great difference.

Perhaps some of you might be inclined to say, "You have just quoted for us a religious poem; and nevertheless you speak slightingly of religious poetry." A mystical poem is not a religious poem in the sense that I means. By religion I mean dogma, fixed beliefs. Mystical poetry arises above dogma notwithstanding that it may contain the deepest possible reverential feeling. And the proof of this distinction which I mean you can find in the fact that a really good mystical poem can be equally appreciated by persons of other creeds and rendered into the language of any form of religious philosophy. For example the little poem by Blake that we have read could be rendered into an Indian or an Arabic or a Persian or a Chinese version without losing its original value. I should not go so far as the celebrated thinker, who using the word religion in the dogmatic sense, declares that all religious literature is rubbish; but I should certainly take this position that it is likely to be the less valuable the more of dogmatic belief that it contains.

Now Wordsworth, meditatively, is at his best when he describes the influence of nature upon his heart and upon his sentiments of humanity and kindliness. Perhaps you remember the beautiful little poem about the daffodils which I quoted to you last year in another connection. The poet was walking along the river and saw the flowers nodding and dancing in the sun, as currents moved their slender stalks, and after he got home he still saw them in memory,—and the memory made him glad,—and he told us that he felt his heart dancing with the daffodils. That is an example of the proper study of natural beauty in relation to our own feelings. At other times we find him more reflective—for instance, in his poems of the daisy, the celandine, etc. We cannot quote extensively; but we may quote illustratively.

TO THE DAISY

Bright flower, whose home is everywhere!
A Pilgrim bold in Nature's care,
And oft, the long year through, the heir
Of joy or sorrow;
Methinks that there abides in thee
Some concord with humanity,
Given to no other flowers I see
The forest through!

And wherefore? Man is soon deprest;
A thoughtless Thing! who, once unblest,
Does little on his memory rest,
Or on his reason;
But Thou would'st teach him how to find
A shelter under every wind,
A hope for times that are unkind
And every season.

It is not very deep, but it is impressive. Put in plain prose it signifies about this:—

"The daisy grows everywhere—robustly, cared for, not by men, but by Nature only. It grows by the roadside on the river banks, in the fields. Cows and horses and men trample it under foot; wheels pass over it; frosts try to kill it; snow

and hail fall upon its place of rest. But whatever happens it comes up again, in the flowering season. To some extent it reminds us of mankind. Human beings also grow everywhere and they have to bear millions of misfortunes, innumerable sufferings, countless forms of pain and death. How many millions of people every year die before their time—by sickness, accident, war, famine, conflagration! After all the lot of man and of the daisy is not so very different in the universal struggle of Nature. But men make a great fuss about their pains and their troubles. They are very easily depressed by little misfortunes, very easily discouraged by some apparent obstacle in the way of their foolish wishes. The daisies are not discouraged at all. When the sun shines on them and the rain refreshes them, they show their gladness by looking cheerful and when their fate is to be crushed or killed, they have nothing to complain of. They accept their fate. Would it not be better if men could do the same?"

Now perhaps you will say, "What a silly poem!—the plants do not complain because they have no lips to complain with and no hearts to hope with." But that is not all the meaning of the poem: Wordsworth saw deeper than that. He is really suggesting the universal law of life—the great necessity of bearing the struggle patiently. And if his poem reminds us of it, he has imparted a teaching not to be despised.

He has other and longer poems about the daisy; though we cannot cite them all. I may quote a bit here and there to show how much the common flower charmed him into the utterance of pretty things:

In shoals and bands, a morrice train,
Thou greet'st the traveller in the lane,
Pleased at his greeting thee again;
    Yet nothing daunted,
Nor grieved, if thou be set at nought:
And oft alone in nooks remote
We meet thee, like a pleasant thought,
    When such are wanted.

The last line but one is a gem: Wordsworth often surprises us like that. What could be prettier as a comparison than the appearance of a pretty flower to a pleasant thought? And here is another stanza from the same composition.

> A hundred times, by rock or bower,
> Ere thus I have lain couched an hour,
> Have I derived from thy sweet power
> Some apprehension;
> Some steady love; some brief delight;
> Some memory that had taken flight;
> Some chime of fancy wrong or right;
> Or stray invention.

Why? Because he tells us in the earlier part of the poem that in every place where he had played or walked about the time of childhood he had seen daisies—that their pretty little pink and white faces had become associated in his memory with all the happiness of his past and with all its sorrow. So, even to-day as a man, the moment he happens to see daisies in a strange place they remind him of all the joy and grief that he ever knew—as well as of the necessity for brave patience.

The celandine is another flower about which Wordsworth wrote many songs. A part of the best of his poems on this flower I will quote to show you the same method of treatment in another aspect. It is really now recognized to be the best of all methods. I mean the art of studying natural things in their relation to our psychological life, rather than in themselves. In olden times men were taught to try to describe landscapes or flowers objectively—very much as we would try to paint a picture. This method of Wordsworth was carried to great perfection in modern literature, yet we must recognize that it is not the best method. Really we cannot describe a flower in verse so as to picture it—much less a landscape. But we can describe what goes on in our hearts while looking at the landscape or the picture.

THE SMALL CELANDINE

There is a Flower, the Lesser Celandine,
That shrinks, like many more, from cold and rain;
And, the first moment that the sun may shine,
Bright as the sun itself, 'tis out again!

When hailstones have been falling, swarm on swarm,
Or blasts the green field and the trees distressed,
Oft have I seen it muffled up from harm,
In close self-shelter, like a Thing at rest.

But lately, one rough day, this Flower I passed
And recognised it, though an altered form,
Now standing forth and offering to the blast,
And buffeted at will by rain and storm.

I stopped, and said with inly-muttered voice,
"It doth not love the shower, nor seek the cold:
This neither is its courage nor its choice,
But its necessity in being old.

"The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew;
It cannot help itself in its decay;
Stiff in its members, withered, changed of hue."
And, in my spleen, I smiled that it was grey.

To be a Prodigal's Favourite—then, worse truth,
A Miser's Pensioner—behold our lot!
O Man, that from thy fair and shining youth
Age might but take the things Youth needed not!

Only the last stanza is a little difficult,—even when you know what the poet means in the preceding verses. We shall explain it presently.

The poet has seen a celandine, and has noticed that, whenever the weather is cold or disagreeable, the flower shuts itself up, as if asleep. And therefore it makes him think of a young man of rich family, who is enabled through his wealth to pass through life without any struggle at all. The world is full of pain and effort; but this happy person knows nothing about the pain or the effort—he can remain quietly at home and have his own pleasure undisturbed.

But another day the poet sees the same flower wide open, in a time of cold wind and storm;—so he is surprised and stops to look at it and perceives that it is dying. The only reason that it does not shut itself up as before, is because it has not the strength to do so. Now it has to bear the cold and the wet, whether it likes or not. And therefore it makes him think of an old man, once very wealthy and very exclusive, but now very poor and miserable, unaccustomed to hardship of any kind, and yet now obliged to bear every kind of hardship, at an age when the body is no longer strong enough to endure pain easily. And, thinking to himself how very much like the end of the wicked and selfish man's life is the condition of the flower, the poet cannot help feeling a little cruel pleasure in observing its forlorn aspect.

But presently, more kindly thoughts come into his mind. After all, he thinks, old age is a sorrowful state for those who have not been trained in youth to bear sorrow and to make strong effort. Wealth itself may be a great misfortune to many. Then comes that last stanza, which I told you is a little hard; let us paraphrase it:—

"The destiny of many men is to be, in the time of their youth, greatly favoured by fortune. But fortune is a great prodigal—a spendthrift. Wealth may easily be robbed. Those who in their youth were the favourites of fortune, in this sense may afterwards become very poor. Now old age is not much pitied. It may be helped by charity; but the amount of that charity is very small—scarcely more than a miser would give as a pension to the servant who has attended him for many years. In another sense all of us are fortunate in the time of youth, because we have strength and hope; and all of us have reason to wish when we get old, that we had made better use of the time when we were young and that we could now have but some of the power, physical and moral, which we set no value upon when we were young."

So in this flower, Wordsworth could see a symbol of

human life—the life of a civilized man.

The beautiful poem about the daffodils is not so deep as this; but it is perhaps the most perfect of Wordsworth's flower pieces. Now to find anything quite so fine as Wordsworth's daffodils one must go to Tennyson. There is one poem by Tennyson about violets, (it might as well be about almost any spring flower), with which you are not perhaps familiar—because it happens to be buried away in the splendid treasure house of reflective poetry: "In Memoriam." As it is very short and extremely beautiful and reflects the spirit of Wordsworth in a new way I shall quote it:—

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
Now burgeons every maze of quick
About the flowering squares, and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
The distance takes a lovelier hue,
And drown'd in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood; that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too; and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms with the rest.*

This is or might be called Wordsworth perfected and enlarged. Wordsworth could not have written that; his grasp of words was not equal to Tennyson's; but he would

* *In Memoriam*, CXV

have thought like that. Let us say a Wordsworthian thought more artistically expressed than was possible in Wordsworth's day. The thought is this:—

"Now the beautiful spring awakens, with its flowers; and the sight of its luminous beauty reminds me of the loveliness of other springs, long ago;—and therefore remembering, I cannot help thinking of the day;—and regret is aroused in my heart. To what flower of spring shall I compare the awakening regret in my heart? Surely to the violet—because it is an humble personal regret and shy. To the violet also, because, though painful, the memory is sweet,—sweet as the perfume of that delicate little flower."

That is all the thought, but what pictures! By the word "quick" in the second line of the first stanza the poet means living and budding plants—probably such plants as boxwood or others of which hedges and garden boarders are made. The reference to the "ringing" of the woodland may refer to the songs of returning birds. The description of the effect of spring mist might be Japanese as well as English—even more so. Very lovely are the lines about the lark, "drowned in the living blue and becoming a sightless song"—that is disappearing in the great sea of blue light, but still heard very plainly. "Living" is a fine word to qualify that blue air, which indeed is life to all breathing things, vegetable or animal. The rest is very plain as to sense, but not less exquisite in painting. Here again you have the fine example of what I told you about the highest art in description—not a description merely of nature as seen, but of nature as felt,—the expression of the emotions and memories that it awakens in our heart as the light and warmth of spring awakens the violets. Well, Tennyson or Wordsworth often combined both kinds of description; and the psychological method is the highest. But the other is not to be despised, when the hand that paints is the hand of a true artist. For instance—here is a little bit, which in the book has no name, but which I shall call—

WHITE SPRING LIGHT

Spring goeth all in white,
Crowned with milk-white may:
In fleecy flocks of light
O'er heaven the white clouds stray:

White butterflies in the air;
White daisies prank the ground:
The cherry and hoary pear
Scatter their snow around.

That is by Robert Bridges—a very excellent minor poet is Robert Bridges, and he never writes anything which is not good. He is still alive, and writing; and he is one of the very few English poets who, in spite of the romantic movement, still keeps to classical traditions. Now that is like a Japanese water-colour print of the last century, or still older: you can see what is described. You have not the May flower here, perhaps, but you have other flowers that make up for it. The English have not your cherry trees, but they have other cherry trees which have beautiful blossoms in spring and a pear or apple tree, for a short time, does look almost as beautiful as the Japanese cherry and plum tree. I say almost as beautiful, because in England the flower do not come before the leaves; and therefore the effect of pure white or pure pink like a cloud is a little broken. Still this picture in most simple words pleases us almost as much as Tennyson's highly elaborate verses on the blossoming of the same season. The only reason that we must give Bridges' poem an inferior place is that it does not touch our emotion: it only speaks to our eyes, not to our hearts. We must think of it just as we think of a spring flower, or a single peep through some window at a beautiful landscape.

I am now going to say something about poetry—floral poetry—of a more general character; poetry that speaks not of some one flower in particular but of flowers in general. The last two poems naturally led up to this subject. About

flowers in general we have many philosophical, symbolical, and religious poems. But I am not sure that many of them are worth studying. A considerable number represent nothing more than moral commonplaces in commonplace verse. Even Wordsworth has been guilty of being tiresome in this direction. However, long before his day English poets sometimes preached about flowers and set the example. Any man has a right to preach if he feels a natural impulse in that direction and has ability enough to say something beautiful and original. If he be by profession a clergyman —so much the better. One of the best poems about flowers in general is by a preacher, who had something to say and could say it very well. He was a bishop in England about four hundred years ago, and he is remembered in literature by the name of Henry King. I am going to quote his little sermon in verse, because I think that you will like it.

A CONTEMPLATION UPON FLOWERS

Brave flowers—that I could gallant it like you,
And be as little vain!
You come abroad, and make a harmless show,
And to your beds of earth again.
You are not proud: you know your birth:
For your embroider'd garments are from earth.

You do obey your months and times, but I
Would have it ever Spring:
My fate would know no Winter, never die,
Nor think of such a thing.
O that I could my bed of earth but view
And smile, and look as cheerfully as you!

O teach me to see Death and not to fear,
But rather to take truce!
How often have I seen you at a bier,
And there look fresh and spruce!
You fragrant flowers! then teach me, that my breath
Like yours may sweeten and perfume my death.

If you look for the dates of Henry King you will find

that he was born in 1592—yet how very modern the English of the poem looks and sounds! Unless you have a very keen eye for quaint English you cannot see where the old fashioned language is. Of course if you have been accustomed from childhood, you could see the difference between the bishop's English and modern English, but not by the eye. The very word with which the poem opens is not the same word as the modern "brave"—though the meaning is even larger. It is rather identical with the Scotch word "braw" used in the same way that we find it used in the ballad of "Proud Masie:"—

'Tell me, thou bonny bird,
When shall I marry me?'
—'When six braw gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye.'

I think you will remember the story—how the proud girl asks the robin when she will be married, and the bird answers her with the sinister answer, "When six braw gentlemen will carry you toward the church" (which might mean "take you to the church to your wedding," but really does mean, "take you to the church for your funeral"). Now in that little ballad by Sir Walter Scott, the word "braw" might best be rendered into Japanese, I think, by the expression *kôdaina*—which means stately or grand in appearance, rather than handsome. And that is the old English meaning of the word "brave" as Biship King used it—noble looking, stately, dignified, grand—sometimes also fine. The expression "to gallant it" is also very quaint, as the use of the "it" ought to show. The phrase means only to act "gallantly"—but "gallantly" has also changed in meaning a little. It now signifies "in a courtly and manly way," but the old meaning was rather that of "knightly brave." So the two words above commented on, have actually exchanged meaning. This is what the poet says:—

"O you handsome flowers, you noble-looking flowers! How much I wish that I could act as bravely and look as

nobly as you do, and nevertheless remain, like you, modest and unassuming. You come to the world and show your beauty without trying to injure anybody—and then you go back again to the ground, out of which you grew, and make no complaint. You are not proud, you know your real place in the world, and the humbleness of your origin—and you do not try to imagine yourselves any better than you are. Mankind is not thus wise and humble. Men, indeed, come out of the dust of the earth, like you do, and they must go back again to the dust of the earth as you do;—but men are proud, and foolish and try to hurt one another.

"And you beautiful flowers, you come always at the proper season, and then go away again, uncomplainingly, when it is time to die. We men are not so obedient to the laws of Heaven—no: we want our own pleasure, always to have pleasant weather and good fortune, never to have any suffering and never to die. We want to live for ever—although that is impossible. Little flowers, you stand above your own grave and smile—I wish that I could do the same. We men standing upon the ground, are afraid to think that we are standing upon our own grave—that the earth must swallow us all.

"Teach me, little flowers, to look at Death in the face without being afraid—teach me to think of death only as a period of rest from life (you must read the word "truce" here in the sense of rest or pause). Teach me to remember that for men as for flowers there is winter, called death; but we both must rise again when the winter shall have passed. How oft have I seen you, pretty flowers, on the coffin of a dead man; and there you continued to look as fresh and beautiful as when you were in the garden. Instruct me how to speak so that my breath of words may, like your breath of perfume, help to make happy and beautiful the hour of my own death."

Except for the last two lines regarding the religious value of conduct in speech, there is nothing in the poem of an especially religious kind; and there is nothing at all to

show that a bishop wrote it. It is one of those flower poems that would mean the same thing in the language of any civilized country.

It is not always the ecclesiastics who are the most religious in their verses. Sometimes we find outsiders, "laymen" as the Church would call them, who wrote far more ecclesiastically than the clergymen. Miss Rossetti, though the greatest of English female poets, produced a good deal of devotional poetry, and a few of them was about flowers. But as she was at all times a fine artist, even her religious poetry on this subject is worth quoting here; her devotion could not spoil it; at least the following example is a good proof of the fact:—

CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD

Flowers preach to us if we will hear:—
The rose saith in the dewy morn,
I am most fair;
Yet all my loveliness is born
Upon a thorn.
The poppy saith amid the corn:
Let but my scarlet head appear
And I am held in scorn;
Yet juice of subtle virtue lies
Within my cup of curious dyes.
The lilies say: Behold how we
Preach without words of purity.
The violets whisper from the shade
Which their own leaves have made:
Men scent our fragrance on the air,
Yet take no heed
Of humble lessons we would read.

In these few lines you have a summary of what I already told you about the symbolism of three flowers—the rose, the lily and the violet. But the reference to the poppy will seem new. There are several kinds of poppies, but Miss Rossetti was referring particularly to the scarlet poppy, which grows a great deal in English corn fields, somewhat to the vexa-

tion of the farmers. This is the same flower referred to by Tennyson, in "The Princess," where the Princess is described as "More crumpled than a poppy from the sheath."*

When the flower first opens its petals, they are crumpled in a most extraordinary way. The illusions to the "subtle virtues" of the poppy reminds us that opium is obtained from its seeds, and as this drug is used a great deal in medicine, the poet is quite right in speaking of it as beneficent in its action.

Among other poems on flowers, in general, which the student should not allow himself to forget is the famous description of flower beauty embodied in Sheley's "Sensitive Plant." All of this poem is by no means equal in merit; and the subject proper of the poem, being a plant rather than a flower, does not exactly come within the range of the lecture. But the description of flowers in the beginning of it is one of the beautiful things of English literature, and I must quote a few stanzas:—

> And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
> Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale
> That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
> Through their pavilions of tender green.

It is true that this beautiful flower, the so-called lily of the valley, is so delicately formed, that you can see the white of its bell-shaped blossoms actually shining through the leaves. The poet compares it to a maiden consumed by lovers, and made beautiful by her passionate paleness. I think you know that a Naiad means a river goddess or nymph; the Greeks believed in such female divinities.

> And the rose like a nymph to the bath addrest,
> Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,
> Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
> The soul of her beauty and love lay bare:

> And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
> As a Mænad, its moonlight-coloured cup,

* *The Princess*, V. 29

Till the fiery star, which is its eye,
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky.

Many other flowers are referred to:—but these are the most famous stanzas. In describing the second kind of lily —the garden lily—which has a much larger flower, the poet likens it to a Mænad. A Mænad was a woman—whether maiden or wife—who followed the Greek divinity of wine and song, Dionysus,—dancing and brandishing various emblems in honour of God. It is said that these female dancers became madly excited, and that, in their sacred frenzy, they would sometimes seize men, or even wild beasts, and tear them to pieces with their hands. You may wonder why Shelley should compare the beautiful garden flower to one of these furious dancers. Probably he was not thinking about the darker side of the tradition, but about some beautiful naked figure of a Mænad which he had seen engraved upon a Greek gem. Some of these gem-prints, cut in pure white upon a dark ground, are extraordinarily beautiful, with a peculiar slender kind of beauty that would fully justify the poet in comparing the figure to that of a beautiful lily.

In Tennyson the most remarkable description of flowers in general will be found in the wonderful song in "Maud," now known wherever the English language is spoken, for it has been set to very fine music. I need cite only one stanza of it, to remind you of the whole. That is—

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
  Come hither, the dances are done,
In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
  Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
  To the flowers, and be their sun.*

These words are addressed to a girl; but they illustrate admirably that symbolism of which I spoke at the beginning of this lecture. All girls are compared to rosebuds; but the beloved one to a queen rose; and she is called both lily and

* *Maud*, Part I. xxii. 9

rose, by way of illustrating the lover's certitude of the moral as well as the physical beauty. And there is in the close of a stanza, just a suggestion of a sunflower, emblem of faithful affection. But the whole song is full of beautiful conceit about flowers, with such lines as—

> The soul of the rose went into my blood,

or—

> Whenever a March-wind sighs
> He sets the jewel-print of your feet
> In violets blue as your eyes.

And Tennyson never forgot the symbolism of the song, in which the lover declares that, if he were dead and buried, and that girl happened to walk over his grave, his heart would change into a flower and rise up through the ground to blossom before her feet. The fancy is not altogether new; old Arabic poets sang something very like it centuries before Mahommed was born;—but it was never said so beautifully before in a modern poem.

Another famous line of Tennyson's is that about

> That maiden in the tale,
> Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of flowers.*

The story alluded to is in "The Mabinogion," a famous old Welsh book, in which the oldest stories about King Arthur may be found. In this story we are told of a hero, who was cursed by a jealous witch, with a curse that rendered it impossible for him to marry any mortal woman. But the young hero had a friend who was a very great magician, named Gwydion; and Gwydion made for him a beautiful girl out of flowers; and he married her. Unfortunately the maiden made out of flowers, although more beautiful than any other being in the world, was not of a good heart; and she acted so badly that her husband had to punish her by turning her into an owl. However, the story reminds us how very old must be the poetical relation be-

* *Idyls of the King: The Marriage of Geraint*, 743-4

tween the beauty of women and the beauty of flowers.

Speaking of Tennyson I should remind you that the nearest approach which he has made to a mystical poem of a short kind is the little piece beginning "Flower in the crannied wall." I need not quote it for you; you can read it* for yourselves. The use of the term "flower" in the poem illustrates what I told you at the beginning of this lecture,—namely that the word "flower" is loosely used in English to mean the whole plant as well as the blossom. Here it means everything—blossom, leaves, stem and root. The poet says: "O flower, you are so small that I can hold you root and all in my hand—yet I cannot tell what you are. If I could tell—if I could know the secret of the life that is in you,—then I could know the whole great mystery of God and man and the Universe."

In this little composition Tennyson comes very close to some of the old Japanese poets, who also in two or three lines of verse, could express or suggest a thought worthy of the attention of the deepest thinker.

As I have mentioned mystical poetry and symbolic poetry, I must not forget to remind you that Rossetti has written two poems belonging to this class. One is called "The Woodspurge;" the other "The Honeysuckle." As I have already quoted these poems in other lectures,† I need not do so now, but since the titles may be new to some of you, I shall explain the subjects. The woodspurge is a small wild flower of a peculiar shape. One day the poet is in great sorrow, great despair; and he goes out alone into the woods, and sits down. While mourning there alone he observes the blossom of a woodspurge before him, and he notices that it has a form like that of three cups placed one above

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* Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

† *Cf.* L. Hearn: "On Poets," p. 10 ff.

another :—

> From perfect grief there need not be
> Wisdom or even memory:
> One thing then learnt remains to me,—
> The woodspurge has a cup of three.

The other piece, "The Honeysuckle," tells us about a man who, while walking along a country road, sees in a hedge by the wayside, a beautiful honeysuckle flower. He tries to get it; but, in order to get it, he has to cross a dirty ditch, and to force a way through thorny plants—when he does get the flower his clothes are all covered with mud and his hands are bleeding. Going on a little further, he comes to the garden of a rich man, where hundreds of much finer honeysuckles are growing. He looks at them in great admiration, and throws away the poor flowers which gave him so much pain to get. But he cannot, or does not, pluck any of the others. The suggestion here is of a man who, in his young days, took the pains to win the love of some poor and pretty country girl. It gave him a great deal of trouble to win her. But, later on in life, becoming rich or famous, he finds it in his power to obtain in marriage a very much finer or more beautiful woman. And he ungratefully casts away the simple love that he had such trouble in former days to get. Nevertheless he does not or cannot make another happy union.

Not only are women commonly associated with flowers throughout the history of English poetry; they are often also associated with birds. Terms of affection bestowed upon them often take the form of birds' names—indeed this poetical custom is as old as "The Song of Solomon" (perhaps older), for we find there the impassioned verse beginning, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret hiding places of the stairs, let me hear thy voice."* But perhaps you don't know that it was at one time in England a popular and poetical custom to call women birds. The old ballads are

* *The Song of Solomon*, ii, 14

full of names to which the term "bird" is prefixed; and the unmarried woman is said to be "bird-alone," or "without a bird." Of course the custom needs no explanation. Now in modern poetry treating of flowers in general, we sometimes find women, flowers and birds all brought together as a thing of beauty and tenderness. I have chosen a little song to illustrate this triple grouping, because the song is sweet and strange. It is by Arthur O'Shaughnessy.

SONG

Now I am on the earth,
  What sweet things love me?
Summer, that gave me birth,
  And glows on still above me;
The bird I loved a little while;
  The rose I planted;
The woman in whose golden smile
  Life seems enchanted.

Now I am in the grave,
  What sweet things mourn me?
Summer, that all joys gave,
  Whence death, alas! hath torn me;
One bird that sang to me; one rose
  Whose beauty moved me;
One changeless woman; yea, all those
  That living loved me.

It is very light poetry and just vague enough to leave a dreamy feeling in the mind. But I quoted only as an illustration of the grouping which I told you about. Now I am going to speak of narrative poems about flowers—not long Romances, like the "Romance of the Rose;" but only that class of lyrical poetry to which this lecture must be confined.

Of course there are a considerable number of such narrative poems; and we have only room and time for about two. The most curious one that I know of in modern English literature is a poem by the son of the famous novel-writer, Bulwer-Lytton. You know that Bulwer-Lytton's son

became a great figure both in the world of statesmanship and of polite letters; he was Viceroy of India and known as a poet by the name of "Owen Meredith." He wrote a curious romance or rather romantic ballad—partly ironical, partly sentimental—which properly belongs to our subject because of its treatment of a certain jasmine flower. The jasmine flower is particularly esteemed for its perfume which is very rich and penetrating, though the flower itself is not large. Single buds of jasmine, like a single rose bud, are often worn at balls and even palaces by ladies in full dress. It is to the perfume of the flowers in such an association that the poet eloquently refers; that is why I am going to quote him. But I need not quote the whole poem because it is too long and because I quoted some parts of it last year in another connection.* If you want to read it all, you will find a good revised version of it in "The Victorian Anthology" under the title "Aux Italiens" (i.e. in the Italian Opera House). In the older editions of the poet's work, it was called "Resurrection." The story is this:—a rich young man had been betrothed to a young lady of great rank and beauty. They quarrel; the engagement is broken. Then the young girl dies and is buried. Her former lover now attaches himself to another lady—a handsome young widow, immensely wealthy, and it is agreed that they shall marry. With the new betrothed the young man visits the theatre in Paris, to listen to an Italian opera; and he suddenly smells the sweet smell of jasmine-flower, that made him remember the beautiful girl that is dead, that used to wear that flower—and then he begins to think how very foolish he was after all, to quarrel with her. Really she was much more worthy of affection than she whom he is now going to marry, and who is very proud and cold. When he is thinking thus the perfume of the flower seems to become stronger and sweeter all about him in the strangest way;—and he looks about and actually sees the dead girl sitting before him, at the opposite side of the theatre, with that

* *Cf.* L. Hearn: "On Poets," p. 264 ff.

flower in her breast. Love has brought her back from the grave to him—to be forgiven and caressed. It is a queer story—and admirably told, though told in a mocking way. You will be able to guess the character of the whole composition by the following extract:—

Meanwhile, I was thinking of my first love,
  As I had not been thinking of aught for years,
Till over mine eyes there began to move
  Something that felt like tears.

I thought of the dress that she wore last time,
  When we stood, 'neath the cypress trees, together,
In that lost land, in her own soft clime,
  In the crimson evening weather,

By the broken wall, on the brown grass plot;
  And her warm white neck in its golden chain:
And her full, soft hair, wound into a knot,
  And falling loose again:

And the jasmine-flower in her fair young breast,
  (O the faint sweet smell of that jasmine-flower!)
And the last bird singing alone to his nest,
  And the first star over the tower.

* * * *

And I swear, as I thought of her thus, in that hour,
  And of how, after all, old things were best,
That I smelt the smell of that jasmine-flower,
  Which she used to wear in her breast.

It smelt so faint, and it smelt so sweet,
  It made me creep, and it made me cold!
Like the scent that steals from the crumbling sheet
  Where a mummy is half unroll'd.

And I turn'd and look'd. She was sitting there
  In a dim box over the stage; and drest
In the dress that I knew,—with that full soft hair,
  And that jasmine in her breast.

The reference to the mummy is one of the weirdest comparisons that I know of in modern English poetry,—but

certainly one of the best. You know that Egyptian mummies are now kept in most of the museums of the world—dried bodies of men or women who, many thousand years ago, long before the time of European civilization, were buried embalmed with aromatic preparations, in underground vaults or stone tombs. Each body was wrapped from head to foot in long linen bandages—so long that it requires considerable time to unroll a mummy. And as the bandages are taken off, the perfume of the aromatics, by which the body has been preserved from decay, fills all the chamber where the mummy is. When you remember that you will see how effective is the comparison in the poem.

Another celebrated flower poem of narrative kind is a piece from "Miss Blanche Says." It was written by Bret Harte, and it was one of the best things in verse which he did. Moreover it is founded on fact—a story of the American Civil War. Regiments going to battle and passing through Northern towns on their way were very kindly treated by the citizens if they had time to stop. Very often there was no time to stop, they had to march right through. But in such cases women threw flowers at them and men cheered them and little presents were thrown to them as they passed by. This is the story about a rose so thrown to a passing soldier. I shall not quote the whole—only enough to interest you. It is the woman who threw the rose that tells the story.

She complains that, during the time of which she speaks, there was nothing for a woman to do, in the way of helping the nation, except attending fairs for the benefit of the soldiers and there was nothing to hear but the sound of drums and bugles—

> Still it was stupid. Rata-tat-tat!
> Those were the sounds of that battle summer,
> Till the earth seemed a parchment round and flat,
> And every footfall the tap of a drummer;
> And day by day down the Avenue went
> Cavalry, infantry, all together,

Till my pitying angel one day sent
My fate in the shape of a regiment,
That halted, just as the day was spent,
  Here at our door in the bright June weather.

None of your dandy warriors they,—
  Men from the West, but where I know not;
Haggard and travel-stained, worn and gray,
  With never a ribbon or lace or bow-knot:
And I opened the window, and, leaning there,
  I felt in their presence the free winds blowing.
My neck and shoulders and arms were bare,—
I did not dream they might think me fair,
But I had some flowers that night in my hair,
  And here, on my bosom, a red rose glowing.

And I looked from the window along the line,
  Dusty and dirty and grim and solemn,
Till an eye like a bayonet flash met mine,
  And a dark face shone from the darkening column,
And a quick flame leaped to my eyes and hair,
  Till cheeks and shoulders burned all together,
And the next I found myself standing there
With my eyelids wet and my cheeks less fair,
And the rose from my bosom tossed high in air,
  Like a blood-drop falling on plume and feather.

Then I drew back quickly: there came a cheer,
  A rush of figures, a noise of tussle,
And then it was over, and high and clear
  My red rose bloomed on his gun's black muzzle.
Then far in the darkness a sharp voice cried,
  And slowly and steadily, all together,
Shoulder to shoulder and side to side,
Rising and falling and swaying wide,
But bearing above them the rose, my pride,
  They marched away in the twilight weather.

And I leaned from my window and watched my rose
  Tossed on the waves of the surging column,
Warmed from above in the sunset glows,
  Borne from below by an impulse solemn.

Then I shut the window. I heard no more
  Of my soldier friend, nor my flower neither,
But lived my life as I did before.
I did not go as a nurse to the war,—
Sick folks to me are a dreadful bore,—
  So I did n't go to the hospital either.

And that was why she was never married. It is an old woman who tells the story now. But it is not quite finished—

I know your answer. I 'm not yet through.
  Look at this photograph,—"In the Trenches"!
That dead man in the coat of blue
  Holds a withered rose in his hand. That clenches
Nothing!—except that the sun paints true,
  And a woman is sometimes prophetic-minded.
And that 's my romance. And, poet, you
Take it and mould it to suit your view;
And who knows but you may find it too
  Come to your heart once more, as mine did.

This is not great poetry and the sentiment is merely popular. But it is true and sincere and there is a fine swing to the verses describing the movements of the men. A military critic might say that European soldiers are not supposed to march in so loose a way. But American soldiers are not supposed or even allowed to move stiffly—a free swagger motion from the hips is a characteristic of their infantry marching; and when you become accustomed to see it, you begin to think that it is, after all, a great deal better than the more mechanical parade march of European troops.

There is another department of flower poetry—the merely phantastic—and I ought to attempt some illustration of that also. An American poet, Edgar Fawcett, has furnished one very dainty fancy of this kind. The poem is about a toad among the flowers in a garden. I am not sure whether any of you have seen this poem; it is one of those small things which are likely to outlive thousands of longer compositions by American poets—for it is a true bit of poetical art:—

TO A TOAD

Gray dusk, that brings the dewy hours,
Brings thee, of graceless form in sooth!
Dark stumbler at the roots of flowers,
Flaccid, inert, uncouth!

Right ill can human wonder guess
Thy meaning or thy mission here,
Gray lump of mottled clamminess,
With that preposterous leer!

But when I see thy dull bulk where
Luxurious roses bend and turn,
Or some slim lily lifts to air
Her frail and fragrant urn,—

Of these, among the garden ways,
So grim a watcher dost thou seem,
That I, with meditative gaze,
Look down on thee, and dream

Of thick-lipped slaves with ebon sin,
That squat in hideous dumb repose,
And guard the drowsy ladies in
Their still seraglios.

(In the first edition of the above poem, the first word in the third line of the second stanza was "thou;" and in the second edition this was changed into the word "blue," being also substituted as the first word of the first stanza.)

The comparison which the poet makes is that of black eunuchs guarding the door of the women's apartments in the palace of some Sultan. African slaves have usually been employed, and a special class of dumb eunachs, who have had their tongues cut out in early childhood, and whom travellers and historians usually called "mutes," are especially esteemed. The word "seraglio" is used particularly of the quarters of the women in Turkey; but the term is often used in speaking of the same thing in any Mohammedan country. All the words chosen in this poem have been most artistically chosen. Take for example the term "flaccid,"

which gives one the idea of something soft and bag-like. "Inert," signifying either inactive, or disinclined to activity, also very well describes the lazy appearance of a toad. "Uncouth"—a word of which the very sound is clumsy—means both ugly and clumsy; and such is the motion of the toad. Again we have the term, "lump of mottled clamminess," and lump is just the word to fit the apparent shapelessness of the creature in certain attitudes. I need not explain the value of "mottled," nor of "clamminess," but will call your attention to the grotesque exactitude of "preposterous leer." "Leer" especially means a side-long and impudent stare; and the stare of a toad is the most striking characteristic of the creature. "Preposterous" is the very strongest word possible to use in the sense of both "absurd and unexpected." Those are the little touches of art to which I wanted to call your attention; the rest explains itself.

I havn't yet said anything about patriotic poems on flowers—at least nothing in particular. One such poem at least ought to be given by way of illustration. Tennyson's "Daisy" is rather disappointing, for it is, nearly all of it, only a splendid description of foreign flowers; and the reference to the daisy appears only at the end of the poem. I prefer therefore to quote to you the most noteworthy contemporary composition on the subject—Rudyard Kipling's "Flowers." This poem was evoked by a criticism in *The Athenæum**—alleging that however much Mr. Kipling might praise foreign flowers, the English never could be interested in them or think that any other flowers were so beautiful as English flowers. The poetical reply which takes the form of a song is both pretty and touching:—

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* "To our private taste, there is always something a little exotic, almost artificial, in songs which, under an English aspect and dress, are yet so manifestly the product of other skies. They affect us like translations; the very fauna and flora are alien, remote; the dog's-tooth violet is but an ill substitute for the rathe primrose, nor can we ever believe that the wood-robin sings as sweetly in April as the English thrush" —*The Athenæum.*

Buy my English posies! –
You that scorn them may
Won't you greet a friend from home
Half the world away?
Green against the draggled drift,
Faint and frail and first—
Buy my Northern blood-root
And I'll know where you were nursed!
Robin down the logging-road whistles, "Come to me,"
Spring has found the maple-grove, the sap is running free;
All the winds o' Canada call the ploughing-rain.
Take the flower and turn the hour, and kiss your love again!

Buy my English posies!—
You that will not turn,
Buy my hot-wood clematis,
Buy a frond o' fern
Gathered where the Erskine leaps
Down the road to Lorne—
Buy my Christmas creeper
And I'll say where you were born!
West away from Melbourne dust holidays begin—
They that mock at Paradise woo at Cora Lynn—
Through the great South Otway gums sings the great South Main—
Take the flower and turn the hour, and kiss your love again!

Buy my English posies! –
Here's your choice unsold!
Buy a blood-red myrtle-bloom,
Buy the kowhai's gold
Flung for gift on Taupo's face
Sign that spring is come –
Buy my clinging myrtle
And I'll give you back your home!

Broom behind the windy town; pollen o' the pine—
Bell-bird in the leafy deep where the *ratas* twine—
Fern above the saddle-bow, flax upon the plain—
Take the flower and turn the hour, and kiss your love again!

Buy my English posies!
Ye that have your own
Buy them for a brother's sake
Overseas, alone.
Weed ye trample underfoot
Flood his heart abrim—
Bird ye never heeded,
Oh, she calls his dead to him!
Far and far our homes are set round the Seven Seas.
Woe for us if we forget, we that hold by these!
Unto each his mother-beach, bloom and bird and land—
Masters of the Seven Seas, oh, love and understand!

I have not quoted the whole: you will see the appeal of the writer clearly enough from these stanzas. His argument is that flowers are dear to us primarily because of their association with home; therefore wherever men live, the flowers of that place must seem dear and beautiful to them. Then he makes a series of little suggestive word pictures of the season of flowers in Canada—the season of flowers in New Zealand—the season of flowers in Australia—the season of flowers in North India. In all of these places Englishmen live and die—in all these places they love the flowers of the land. Why, then, should their brethren in England refuse to be interested in the flowers of an English colony far away? There could be but one answer—want of true affection for their own blood and kin.

The above is written in the style of flower-girl's style and the singer is comparing his literary expression to nose-

gay or bouquet as they are more usually called in those years.

The mention of the name of foreign flowers reminds me of a poem by Browning entitled "The Flower's Name;" you may notice that I have quoted very little of Browning in the course of this lecture, although he has written beautiful things about flowers, but the reason is that Browning seldom or never writes about flowers except in connection with some other subjects, and by way of illustration. All the beautiful things about flowers, even except perhaps the piece of "Women and Roses" which I quoted to you, are to be found in fragments of verse only—three or four lines long. And even the poem on the flower's name is not quite suited to our subject, for it is a love poem only,—and the flower is mentioned only in relation to a woman. But one stanza of it has become so very famous that I must quote it:—

> This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
> Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim;
> Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
> Its soft meandering Spanish name:
> What a name! Was it love or praise?
> Speech half-asleep or song half-awake?
> I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
> Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

The use of the word "meandering" has made especially famous the fourth line: that is the adjective which we use especially to describe the winding motion of a slow and gentle stream. It is quite true that some of the most beautiful folk-names of flowers in any language are in Spanish; and it is true also that Spanish, especially as spoken by women, is a very sweet language. It is not quite as soft as Italian; but it is very musical with a vowel-music peculiarly its own.

And now, in conclusion, I must quote one bit of religious poetry about flowers. At least I might call it religious

poetry, since it is taken from the greatest of all European poems, and deals with a vision of heaven. But it is religious in the mystical sense chiefly; and you cannot but feel impressed by the splendour of the imagination. I am referring of course to the great poem of Dante; and Dante is not an English poet. But Dante's poem as translated into the English by Longfellow—notwithstanding a great deal of stupid modern criticism, has become an English gem, and its merit is acknowledged at least by the best contemporary judges. So, in one way, I think my quotation really belongs to English literature. The subject is the White Rose of Paradise.

When Dante, in his vision, attained to the Tenth or Highest Heaven, he beheld afar off, in an immeasurable depth, what appeared to him a vast rose of winding light. So dazzling was the center of the Rose that mortal eye might not behold it—only Dante's eyes had been washed with celestial water so that he might have strength to see. Really the heart of the Rose is God himself. But as Dante approaches, he begins to see more clearly the petals of the rose; and those innumerable petals proved to be formed entirely of white souls of millions and millions of human beings. And he sees in the immeasurable distance, what appears to him to be fiery bees or butterflies entering the heart of the flower. But, approaching still more, he perceives that these are angels of light, visiting the souls. Now for the quotation:—

In fashion then as of a snow-white rose
  Displayed itself to me the saintly host,
  Whom Christ in his own blood had made his bride,
But the other host, that lying sees and sings
  The glory of Him who doth enamour it,
  And the goodness that created it so noble,
Even as a swarm of bees, that sinks in flowers
  One moment, and the next returns again
  To where its labour is to sweetness turned,
Sank into the great flower, that is adorned

With leaves so many, and thence reascended
To where its love abideth evermore.
Their faces had they all of living flame,
And wings of gold, and all the rest so white
No snow unto that limit doth attain.*

Assuredly there is nothing in all Western literature about flowers comparable to this tremendous fancy of a rose composed of countless millions of spirits, with God for the heart of it, and the angels of fire for its bees. Critics believed that Dante was inspired with this grand fancy by the sight of a certain very splendid Gothic window of stained glass, actually representing a rose of one thousand petals. The best way, however, to appreciate the glorious fancy is to look at Dore's illustrations to the "Paradise." There you will see the vision of the Rose as Dante must have imagined it. Viewed from a little distance the picture really seems only the picture of the phantom rose, high in heaven. But when you look more closely, you see that every part of the flower is formed of innumerable little white figures.

Here we may leave this subject of flowers. I have been obliged to treat it rather briefly. But you will see from what we have been able to do, how great a place this subject has in English poetry, and how many aspects. But after all these manifold aspects can be resolved under a very few heads. Flower poetry may be generally classed—

I. As poetry relating to women and love;
II. Poetry relating to memory, especially memory of the gentle and melancholy kind;
III. Poetry of a symbolic, emblematic, or mystical kind.

* *Paradiso*, Canto XXXI

CHAPTER XXIV

ON BIRDS IN ENGLISH POETRY

THE poetry of birds is quite important, for it happens to contain several of the great masterpieces of English lyrical poetry. In point of variety, however, the subject may prove a little disappointing. There are not many different kinds of birds with a special place in English lyrical verse. The best of English poetry treats of the nightingale only. Just as the greater number of our flower poems are about the rose, so the greater number of our bird poems are about the nightingale.

To understand the best poems about the nightingale it is necessary for us to go back for a moment to old Greek mythological poetry, for English poems on that bird are rich in allusions to the Greek story about its origin. If you do not know the story, you cannot understand the verses of Matthew Arnold or of Swinburne on the nightingale. Neither can you understand allusions in English literature which are certainly older than the time of Shakespeare.

The story is very horrible; but we must learn it. There was a mythical king of Athens called Pandion; and Pandion had two beautiful daughters, one of whom was named Procne, and the other Philomela. Now it happened that King Pandion was for a time hard beset by strong enemies; and he sent in all haste to the king of Thrace, whose name was Tereus, to help him. Then Tereus helped Pandion, and Pandion gave him in marriage his daughter Procne as a reward; and Tereus took Procne away with him to his own city of Daulis, where she bore him a son called Itys, or Itylus. After a time Procne wanted very much to see again her sister Philomela, and she asked Tereus her husband to

go to Athens for Philomela. Tereus then went to Athens for Philomela; but on the way back he ravished her, and then cut out her tongue for fear that she would tell Procne. He left her in the wood alone with her tongue cut out. Then he went to Daulis and told Procne a lie, saying that Philomela had died on the journey. Poor Philomela could not talk, but she had not forgotten how to weave; and she found her way to the cottage of some peasant, and there, upon a loom, she was able to weave a dress, and in weaving the dress she made Greek letters along the border so as to tell the dreadful story of what had been done to her; and that dress she sent to her sister. So Procne determined to avenge her sister terribly; and she killed her own little boy, Itylus, and cooked his flesh and served it up at dinner to the unsuspecting father. After he had eaten of the dish, she told him what he had eaten, and then fled away in company with her dumb sister. Tereus pursued them, and they prayed to the gods to save them. Now the gods heard their prayers—Philomela was turned into a nightingale, and Procne was turned into a swallow. Tereus and the murdered Itylus were also turned into birds of other kinds. But that need not concern us here. Enough to say that in the cry of the nightingale the Greek poets imagined that they could distinguish the syllables "Teru-Teru," meaning "Tereus;" and that in the cry of the swallow they could distinguish the syllables "Itu-Itu," meaning "Itylus." And although this story is rather long, you must try to remember the whole of it in order to understand the modern as well as the old-fashioned allusions contained in English poems on the nightingale. Also, there is one other thing to remember—that the Greek mythologists themselves did not agree as to which sister became the nightingale. Some said it was Philomela; and others said it was Procne. But the Latin writers decided in favour of Philomela, and the English poets at first followed the Latin writers; even before the time of Shakespeare in England the name Philomela, or Philomelus, was generally accepted for the nightingale.

In proof of this I may quote to you a very old poem about the nightingale, composed in the sixteenth century at some uncertain date. We know that it is older than Shakespeare, because Shakespeare quotes it in his terrible tragedy "King Lear." But it is otherwise interesting as being the earliest poem containing an allusion to the story of which I speak. Its author is Barnefield; and the poem is simply entitled "The Nightingale." Before quoting it let me remind you of the chorus in the fairy lullaby, or serenade, of Shakespeare's comedy, "A Midsummer Night's Dream:"

Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby;
Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby:
Never harm,
Nor spell nor charm,
Come our lovely lady nigh;
So, good night, with lullaby.

This shows that even the common play-going public had already become accustomed to the name Philomela for the nightingale in Shakespeare's day. But the poem of Barnefield, which is older, is more interesting; for it contains most of the classical allusions used in our own time even by the poet Swinburne.

As it fell upon a day
In the merry month of May,
Sitting in a pleasant shade
Which a grove of myrtles made,
Beasts did leap and birds did sing,
Trees did grow and plants did spring;
Everything did banish moan
Save the Nightingale alone:
She, poor bird, as all forlorn,
Lean'd her breast up-till a thorn,
And there sung the dolefull'st ditty,
That to hear it was great pity.
Fie, fie, fie! now would she cry;
Tereu, Tereu! by and by;
That to hear her so complain

Scarce I could from tears refrain;
For her griefs so lively shown
Made me think upon mine own.
Ah! thought I, thou mourn'st in vain,
None takes pity on thy pain:
Senseless trees they cannot hear thee,
Ruthless beasts they will not cheer thee:
King Pandion he is dead,
All thy friends are lapp'd in lead;
All thy fellow birds do sing
Careless of thy sorrowing:
Even so, poor bird, like thee,
None alive will pity me.

Easy as this little song is to read, you could not understand several lines in it without knowing the story;—only the story explains to us why the bird should cry "Tereu, Tereu" and "Fie, fie," which means "For shame;" why King Pandion should be spoken of; or why all the nightingale's friends should be spoken of as "lapp'd in lead" (referring to the old custom of burying the dead in leaden coffins). I quoted this poem as an illustration of the allusions only—not for its great age. If we wanted anything very old on the subject, we might go to Homer, who in the Nineteenth Book of the "Odyssey" represents the brown nightingale as lamenting for the boy Itylus. But we need only refer to modern English literature hereafter, for that contains the jewels of this poetry.

I shall begin with Swinburne; for, notwithstanding the splendour of Keats, Swinburne's "Itylus" must be considered as the very greatest of all modern poems on the nightingale—whether English or French or Italian or anything else. It is the greatest because of the extraordinary beauty and music of the prosody, and the intensity of the emotion in it. You will find the poem very different indeed from anything else of the kind, and I think that you will like it. But without knowing the story that I told you, you could not understand it, and it illustrates better than any other poem what that story signifies for the Greek mind. You

must remember that it is the nightingale who speaks to the swallow.

Swallow, my sister, O sister swallow,
How can thine heart be full of the spring?
A thousand summers are over and dead.
What hast thou found in the spring to follow?
What hast thou found in thine heart to sing?
What wilt thou do when the summer is shed?

O swallow, sister, O fair swift swallow,
Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,
The soft south whither thine heart is set?
Shall not the grief of the old time follow?
Shall not the song thereof cleave to thy mouth?
Hast thou forgotten ere I forget?

Sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow,
Thy way is long to the sun and the south;
But I, fulfill'd of my heart's desire,
Shedding my song upon height, upon hollow,
From tawny body and sweet small mouth
Feed the heart of the night with fire.

I the nightingale all spring through,
O swallow, sister, O changing swallow,
All spring through till the spring be done,
Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,
Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,
Take flight and follow and find the sun.

Sister, my sister, O soft light swallow,
Though all things feast in the spring's guest-chamber,
How hast thou heart to be glad thereof yet?
For where thou fliest I shall not follow,
Till life forget and death remember,
Till thou remember and I forget.

We have to recollect the relationship between Procne and Philomela. The swallow is Procne. The nightingale reproaches her sister because, being a bird, she delights in the spring and would fly south. She herself, a nightingale, will not fly south. Nor will she sing in the light, the sun, nor

will she have any gladness, but will complain for ever—not only because of the wrong that was done to her, but because of the killing of Itylus, the sister's son. Oh, how can that sister forget—even though a thousand summers are past! She, Philomela, will not forget, until such time as death itself shall become the same thing as remembrance, and life itself the same thing as oblivion. That is to say never! never!

The opening lines of several of the stanzas are almost exact copies from an ancient Greek song, with some artistic modifications. We know that Greek children used to sing every year a little song when they saw the swallows come with the fine weather, and in that song the swallow was addressed as "our sister swallow." The word "tawny" in the fifth line of the third stanza—so beautifully used—is suggested also by the Greek term for brown. Tawny is a glowing reddish or yellowish brown.

Swallow, my sister, O singing swallow,
  I know not how thou hast heart to sing.
    Hast thou the heart? is it all past over?
Thy lord the summer is good to follow,
  And fair the feet of thy lover the spring:
    But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover?

O swallow, sister, O fleeting swallow,
  My heart in me is a molten ember
    And over my head the waves have met.
But thou wouldst tarry or I would follow
  Could I forget or thou remember,
    Couldst thou remember and I forget.

O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow,
  The heart's division divideth us.
    Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree;
But mine goes forth among sea-gulfs hollow
  To the place of the slaying of Itylus,
    The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

O swallow, sister, O rapid swallow,
  I pray thee sing not a little space.
    Are not the roofs and the lintels wet?

The woven web that was plain to follow,
  The small slain body, the flower-like face,
    Can I remember if thou forget?

O sister, sister, thy first-begotten!
  The hands that cling and the feet that follow,
    The voice of the child's blood crying yet,
Who hath remember'd me? who hath forgotten?
  Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,
    But the world shall end when I forget.

The reference to the crying of the child reminds us of another story. For it is said that the gods took pity on the little boy and he returned as a wood-pigeon,—I think the bird we call in this country *yamabato*,—and that the mournful cry of this bird is the voice of the boy, still asking, "Has everybody forgotten me? Does nobody remember?"

I cannot speak to you about the reason why the form of this poem is greatly praised by the highest critics; that would take too long, and perhaps would not be interesting. But for musical flow and emotional force, you can see that it is a very great poem. And after what we have been reading, you can understand why the Greeks did not like the singing of the nightingale. They thought it was too sad, and that it was not good fortune to listen to it. How curiously modern poets have changed in this respect! To all European poets to-day, not less than to the poets of Persia and Arabia, the singing of the nightingale is an ecstasy, the very paradise of pleasure in sound. We recognize the sadness in it, but it is pleasant to us. Not so to the Greeks—and perhaps they were right. But a modern poet contemporary with Swinburne, seems to have felt very much like the Greeks in regard to the melancholy side of the sound,—Matthew Arnold. One of his best short poems is entitled "Philomela."

Hark! ah, the Nightingale!
The tawny-throated!
Hark! from that moonlit cedar what a burst!
What triumph! hark—what pain!

O Wanderer from a Grecian shore,
Still, after many years in distant lands,
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain—
  Say, will it never heal?
And can this fragrant lawn
And its cool trees, and night,
And the sweet, tranquil Thames,
And moonshine, and the dew,
To thy rack'd heart and brain
  Afford no balm?

  Dost thou to-night behold
Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?
  Dost thou again peruse
With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes
The too clear web, and thy dumb Sister's shame?
  Dost thou once more assay
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,
Poor Fugitive, the feathery change
Once more, and once more seem to make resound
With love and hate, triumph and agony,
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?
      Listen, Eugenia—
How thick the bursts come crowding through the leaves!
  Again—thou hearest!
Eternal Passion!
Eternal Pain!

Cephissus was the name of a river in Attica. It was there that the sisters originally lived. You can see that Matthew Arnold does not follow exactly the same Greek story that Swinburne does—for in this poem it is not Procne but Philomela who avenges. Swinburne takes the other legend, not only in his "Itylus" but also in the splendid opening of the chorus in "Atalanta:"

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
  The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
  With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;

And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

I need not attempt to explain now to you the allusion to Itylus, the Thracian ships, or the tongueless vigil. But you will see that Swinburne takes the other version of the tale. Either course is quite justified by precedent, and when such great poets and Greek scholars disagree, it is not for us to decide which course is best. I suppose the best way to think about it is to remember that everybody ought to take that view or version of a legend which is best suited to his particular genius.

You can now easily understand why Wordsworth did not like the singing of the nightingale very much; his cold, quiet, thoughtful mind disliked passionate things, even the passionate expression in the sound of a bird's voice. He preferred, he said, the voice of the dove to the nightingale. Perhaps several of us here present would agree with him in that. But I am not able to understand why Wordsworth should think the cooing of a dove more cheerful than the sobbing melody of the nightingale. There is nothing sweeter than the sound of the cooing of certain doves, but surely it is both sad and sorrowful. However, Wordsworth may also have been prejudiced against the nightingale by the horror of the Greek story. This is what he has written about it:

O Nightingale! thou surely art
A creature of a "fiery heart": –
These notes of thine they pierce and pierce;
Tumultuous harmony and fierce!
Thou sing'st as if the God of wine
Had helped thee to a Valentine;
A song in mockery and despite
Of shades, and dews, and silent night;
And steady bliss, and all the loves
Now sleeping in these peaceful groves.

I heard a Stock-dove sing or say

His homely tale, this very day;
His voice was buried among trees,
Yet to be come—at by the breeze:
He did not cease; but cooed—and cooed;
And somewhat pensively he wooed:
He sang of love, with quiet blending,
Slow to begin, and never ending;
Of serious faith and inward glee;
That was the song—the song for me!

The allusion in the fifth and sixth lines, to the god of wine, implies that a nightingale sings as if he were drunk. You know that the word "Valentine" means a love letter or love message. Certainly Wordsworth has no esthetic feeling in certain directions; and it does not at all increase our very proper estimate of him to find him insensible to the charm of the nightingale's song. Yet he is quite right in praising the coo of the dove; for there is nothing more delicious in nature than

The moan of doves in immemorial elms.

Now it is not surprising to find other English poets almost like Wordsworth in his indifference to the nightingale. Coleridge has two poems about the nightingale; and neither of them is worth quoting. The first is only to the effect that he thinks the voice of his wife much sweeter than the voice of a nightingale; and the other is a description of moonlight walks in a garden where nightingales sing, but there is very little about the singing, and a great deal about the maiden with whom the poet was walking. Shelley has a poem about a woodman and a nightingale, but it is an allegory. The nightingale signifies poetry, and the woodman is the vulgar practical man-of-the-world who hates poetry, and would like to suppress all poets. The woodman takes an axe and cuts down the tree on which the nightingale sings; and Shelley would have us believe that the unsentimental world would like to starve all poets to death. The poem is full of beauty indeed; but we need not quote more than a

few stanzas from it, because it is really a little foreign to our subject. I shall speak only about the passages treating of the nightingale's peculiar music. These verses are beautiful:

> One nightingale in an interfluous wood
> Satiate the hungry dark with melody;—
> And as a vale is watered by a flood,
>
> Or as the moonlight fills the open sky
> Struggling with darkness—as a tuberose
> Peoples some Indian dell with scents which lie
>
> Like clouds above the flower from which they rose,
> The singing of that happy nightingale
> In this sweet forest, from the golden close
>
> Of evening till the star of dawn may fail,
> Was interfused upon the silentness;
> The folded roses and the violets pale
>
> Heard her within their slumbers, the abyss
> Of heaven with all its planets; the dull ear
> Of the night-cradled earth; the loneliness
>
> Of the circumfluous waters,—every sphere
> And every flower and beam and cloud and wave,
> And every wind of the mute atmosphere,
>
> . . . .
>
> Was awed into delight, and by the charm
> Girt as with an interminable zone,
> Whilst that sweet bird, whose music was a storm
>
> Of sound, shook forth the dull oblivion,
> Out of their dreams; harmony became love
> In every soul but one.

This is musical and very pretty, and makes us think about the skill of the poet who can use words so melodiously. But it does not make us think about the bird at all. The substance of it is simply that the bird filled the night with music, as flowers fill the air with perfume,—and that everything listened to the magical notes and even the elements

were stilled, and everybody's heart became loving except the heart of that detestable woodcutter. It is much better to turn to poets that give us something to think about on the subject of the nightingale. Let us take, for example, Robert Bridges—whom I might call the very last of the English classical poets, though he is still living. Robert Bridges is, like Swinburne and Arnold, a Greek scholar, and a great many of his poems are renderings of Greek myths, or dramatic compositions formed after a careful study of the Greek poets. Therefore we might expect him at least to make one allusion to the legend of Philomela. But he does not. Nevertheless he gives us something very beautiful and very sad:

Beautiful must be the mountains whence ye come,
And bright in the fruitful valleys the streams, wherefrom
Ye learn your song:
Where are those starry woods? O might I wander there,
Among the flowers, which in that heavenly air
Bloom the year long!

Nay, barren are those mountains and spent the streams:
Our song is the voice of desire, that haunts our dreams,
A throe of the heart,
Whose pining visions dim, forbidden hopes profound,
No dying cadence nor long sigh can sound,
For all our art.

Alone, aloud in the raptured ear of men
We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and then,
As night is withdrawn
From these sweet-springing meads and bursting boughs of May,
Dream, while the innumerable choir of day
Welcome the dawn.

As I have said, he makes no allusion directly to the Greek story; nevertheless the poem can be fully understood only by those who know that story. For the barren mountains and the dried-up rivers will make them think of the Thracian country and the hills about Attica. This is worth

paraphrasing; you will then see the beauty of it better.

First, the poet says to the nightingales,—"O nightingales, surely you must have come from some heavenly country to be able to sing like that! How beautiful must be the mountains of your native land, and how fruitful the valley, and how bright the rivers of the region in which you first learned to sing. Tell me where are those luminous, heavenly woods! O how I wish I could go to that place and wander among the celestial flowers, which never fade in that country of heaven and of eternal summer." But the nightingales answer: "No, you are much mistaken! We do not come from heaven; and the mountains of our country are mountains where no trees grow, and the rivers of our country are dried up for ever. And the song that we sing is a song of longing and of pain—a pain of remembrance that haunts our dreams, an agony of heart. And the dim things that we see in memory and long for, the deep hopes that we once had and which we are forbidden now to entertain, —these are things which all our art of sorrowful music never can alter. Only at night we sing. Then all alone we try to tell our dark night-secret to the ears of men; and men are delighted by the sound of our sorrow, only because they do not understand. And then, when the night passes away from the fragrant blossoming meadows and the budding branches of the spring-blooming trees, we sleep. We sleep —but the other innumerable birds hail the god of day with their morning songs while we begin to dream."

I forgot to tell you that Dr. Bridges is a musician, as well as a physician and poet. Wordsworth was not a musician, nor did he have much of what is called "an ear for music;" perhaps that is one reason why he did not care for the nightingale, because it really requires a musical ear to appreciate the finer qualities of the song of that bird. Swinburne understood music; so did Keats a little; so did Shelley to some degree. And Milton, who was an excellent musician, was also a lover of the nightingale. Here is a famous sonnet which he wrote about it:

O nightingale, that on yon bloomy spray
Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still;
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,
While the jolly hours lead on propitious May:
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,
Portend success in love; Oh, if Jove's will
Have link'd that amorous power to thy soft lay,
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate
Foretell my hopeless doom in some grove nigh;
As thou from year to year hast sung too late
For my relief, yet hadst no reason why:
Whether the Muse, or Love, call thee his mate,
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

From this poem by Milton we know that the song of the nightingale was considered lucky to hear in the seventeenth century, as well as before it; while it was considered a bad omen to hear the hooting of an owl. And Milton seems to have found much more pleasure than sadness in the bird's note.

Is it not curious to find Milton, the most scholarly of all poets, and perhaps the most musical of his generation, touching so lightly and tenderly on the subject of the nightingale? It reminds us of the way in which Milton looked at Shakespeare. He did not think of Shakespeare like the other poets of the time; he found him joyful and merry, and spoke of him as "warbling his native wood-notes wild."* He called him "sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child," at a time when nobody else understood how great Shakespeare really was. But Milton did not see the great depth of Shakespeare; and perhaps, for the same reason, he did not feel certain profound qualities of sadness suggested by the music of the bird. But the most perfect expression of these deeper feelings—feelings independent of the Greek story altogether—was given years later, and then by Keats. Keats's poem, the "Ode to a Nightingale," is the greatest of all English nightingale poems, except the "Itylus" of Swinburne. But re-

* *L'Allegro*, 134-5

member that it is altogether different and has nothing to do with "Itylus." It is only an attempt to express in perfect verse the particular emotions which the song of the nightingale aroused in the heart of the poet. After this passionate and beautiful poem, other poems about the nightingale will perhaps seem very pale. But I shall quote only one more—by Christina Rossetti, the greatest woman poet of her time. Compared with Keats's "Ode" it is very simple, but it is pretty and, in its way, full of sweetness.

The sunrise wakes the lark to sing,
  The moonrise wakes the nightingale.
Come darkness, moonrise, every thing
  That is so silent, sweet, and pale:
  Come, so ye wake the nightingale.

Make haste to mount, thou wistful moon,
  Make haste to wake the nightingale:
Let silence set the world in tune
  To hearken to that wordless tale
  Which warbles from the nightingale.

O herald skylark, stay thy flight
  One moment, for a nightingale
Floods us with sorrow and delight.
  To-morrow thou shalt hoist the sail;
  Leave us to-night the nightingale.

The appeal is being made to a skylark which has begun to sing a little too early, before it is quite yet dawn, and while the nightingale is still singing. That appeal is in the last stanza only. The first stanza represents the poet's longing during the day for the coming of the night and the nightingale; in the second stanza the night has come, and the moon is asked to waken the nightingale; and in the third stanza the night is almost passed, and the skylark has begun to twitter, though the nightingale has not yet done. The whole thing is a pretty little song. No explanation in detail is necessary. But please remember that the phrase "set in tune," in the third line of the second stanza, is a

musical term, signifying to prepare an instrument for the playing of music. Silence is personified as the musician, who is asked to prepare the world for the music of the bird. And in the fourth line of the last stanza the phrase "hoist the sail" means only to rise up into the sky as the bird does. Poets often use the word "sail" in speaking of the wings of the bird; thus Smart, in his "Song to David," says—

Strong the gier-eagle on his sail.*

Next to the nightingale in importance—in English poetry at least—we find the cuckoo. As the rose, the violet and the lily are chief subjects in English poetry, so are the nightingale, the cuckoo and the skylark. Of course the difference in merit of the cuckoo and the skylark is exceedingly great, the call of the cuckoo representing only the sweet and simple notes, while the singing of the skylark is a splendid and ecstatic warble. So we might suppose the poetry about the cuckoo to be simple, like the note of the bird, and the poetry about the skylark to be elaborate and wonderful. This is just what we do find. Yet the cuckoo must be ranked in poetry next to the nightingale, notwithstanding that little of the poetry about it is of really great character—like Shelley's ode "To a Skylark," for example.

One reason is perhaps that English poetry about the cuckoo is older than anything of importance about the skylark. The earliest English poem about the cuckoo was written in the thirteenth century. The Norman Conquest was like a blow that stunned English literature, and the poets had nothing to say for more than a hundred years. After that long silence, the first new warble was the famous cuckoo song. But I will not quote it to you, because it is written in early Middle English, and is full of obsolete words. You can find it in the anthologies. When the next great poetical awakening came with Shakespeare, Shakespeare himself made a new cuckoo song. In the classical, or Augustan, era of English literature, a third cuckoo song was

* *A Song to David*, LXXVI

heard. Finally in the nineteenth century Wordsworth and others made poems about the bird. So you see that the English have been making poems on the cuckoo for about six hundred and fifty years. That is why we must rank its place next to the nightingale's.

But before telling you anything more about the poetry, I want to talk of an obsolete word, without any knowledge of which the next poem would not be understood. I mean the word "cuckold." It means a man who has been deceived by his wife—a man whose wife has been unfaithful to him. I suppose you know the European cuckoo is the most immoral of all birds in its habits. By immoral, I do not mean sexually immoral, but immoral in the widest possible sense. It is a wicked and fierce and cunning bird, apparently without natural affection of any strong kind. It makes no nest of its own, but lays its eggs in the nests of other birds, who hatch them. And the egg is usually laid in the nest of some small weak bird, so that as soon as the little cuckoo becomes strong, it is able to drive away or kill the young of the bird who hatched it. You might say that it was the adulterer, not the husband, who ought to have been called "cuckold." But the real meaning of the word was not a man who had acted like the cuckoo but a man who had been cuckooed, so to speak,—treated as honest birds are treated by a cuckoo. And now you will understand Shakespeare's "Spring Song."*

When daisies pied and violets blue
  And lady-smocks all silver-white
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
  Do paint the meadows with delight,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,
                Cuckoo;
Cuckoo, cuckoo: O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws,
  And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks,

* *Love's Labour 's Lost*, V, ii, 904-21

When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws,
  And maidens bleach their summer smocks,
The cuckoo then, on every tree,
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,
                Cuckoo;
Cuckoo, cuckoo: O word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!

There is nothing here to explain except some old fashioned words. "Pied" means of two or more different colours. "Lady-smocks," a quaint name for a certain wild flower, literally means a lady's shirt or undergarment. It is no longer used of women's clothing; but overshirts used by English workmen, while at their work, are still called smocks. "Pipe on oaten straws," means to make music with a little instrument called a "Pan's-pipe," made of straws of different length fitted together. Oat straws were preferred on account of their strength.

The most celebrated of all English poems about the cuckoo is that of Michael Bruce, who wrote about the middle of the eighteenth century; he was born in 1746, and died in 1767. It was from him that Wordsworth got his inspiration for a cuckoo poem, and I think that Bruce is much better than Wordsworth in this single field. After having read him, Wordsworth's verses seem very pale in comparison—perhaps all the more so because both poems happen to be in the same simple quatrain-form.

TO THE CUCKOO

Hail, beauteous stranger of the wood!
  Thou messenger of Spring!
Now Heaven repairs thy rural seat,
  And woods thy welcome sing.

What time the daisy decks the green,
  Thy certain voice we hear:
Hast thou a star to guide thy path,
  Or mark the rolling year?

Delightful visitant! with thee
  I hail the time of flowers,

And hear the sound of music sweet
  Of birds among the bowers.

The schoolboy, wandering through the wood
  To pull the flowers so gay,
Starts, thy curious voice to hear,
  And imitates thy lay.

What time the pea puts on the bloom,
  Thou fliest thy vocal vale,
An annual guest in other lands,
  Another spring to hail.

Sweet bird! thy bower is ever green,
  Thy sky is ever clear;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
  No winter in thy year!

. . . .

O could I fly, I'd fly with thee!
  We'd make, with joyful wing,
Our annual visit o'er the globe,
  Companions of the spring.

Really the cuckoo is not a lovable bird; there is even a proverb, "Ungrateful as a cuckoo." For the young cuckoo will dash out the eyes of the mother bird trying to feed it. It is a detestable bird; and it is, I believe, in many ways like the Japanese bird whose name is often incorrectly translated into English as "cuckoo." They may be ornithologically related; the relation is very remote. But the sound of the cuckoo's voice is very sweet and very penetrative; and for that reason the bird has been praised in poetry from very ancient times. The first English song about the cuckoo is almost a song of caress; and that which we have just read is composed in an equally loving tone. Probably Shakespeare's song was suggested by some French poem, but even when speaking of the bird's song as ill-omened, he does so in so merry a way that we think only of the delight of spring. Wordsworth's poem may now be compared with that of Bruce.

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear;
From hill to hill it seems to pass
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale,
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery;

The same whom in my schoolboy days
I listened to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green;
And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessèd Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!

The stanzas appear weak by the side of Bruce's. But there is beauty in Wordsworth's to me; and his conception of the subject is quite different from Bruce's. To Bruce the cuckoo brought the thought of the joy of spring and the

delight of being able to go from country to country, like the bird of passage, so as to live for ever in one eternal round of spring. To Wordsworth, on the contrary, the cry of the cuckoo chiefly brings the delight of memory—memory of child days. He remembers how he used to try to find the cuckoo, when he heard it, and never could,—and so imagined it to be a ghostly thing. (It is really very hard to find or to see, for it is most skilful in concealing itself.) And so, whenever he hears the cuckoo, the boy hearing it comes back again and, with it, the delightful capacity to imagine the world as a kind of fairy land, peopled by ghosts and elves. Childhood is the real time of romance, when we prefer to believe the impossible rather than the possible, because the impossible appears so much more beautiful. There is better thinking in the Wordsworth poem than in Bruce's poem; but as to form and music, Bruce's stanzas are much the better.

I do not think that it would be worth while to quote to you any more poems about the cuckoo; for these are the most famous, and the rest do not rise to the great height of lyrical poetry. And I will not say anything covering the early symbolic poetry about the cuckoo, for that does not properly belong to our subject. Let us now read some poems—only the very best—about the skylark. After that we shall go to a very splendid subject,—the sea-gull.

English poetry about the lark begins almost as early, though perhaps not quite so early, as English poetry upon the nightingale. Shakespeare was one of the first English poets to write a really memorable poem on the subject, though there were mentions of the lark's song long before his time. It is a noteworthy fact that Shakespeare's little song, which you will find in the play of "Cymbeline," is still sung, though composed more than three hundred years ago. It contains only a line or two about the lark; but it is so very famous that you ought to know it. Besides, it represents so well that southern French form of song called the *aubade* or "morning song," that we may quote it for

another reason. I think you know that love songs addressed to some lady and intended to be sung at night were called serenades;—the *aubade* or morning song, was a love song with which the lady was supposed to be awakened, after having been pleasantly lulled to sleep by the serenade. This is Shakespeare's morning song:

> Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
> And Phœbus 'gins arise,
> His steeds to water at those springs
> On chaliced flowers that lies;
> And winking Mary-buds begin
> To ope their golden eyes:
> With every thing that pretty bin,
> My lady sweet, arise!
> Arise, arise! *

You know that Phœbus is another name for the sun-god, more commonly called by the Greeks Helios. He was accustomed to drive his chariot across the sky every day, drawn by a team of four steeds abreast; and he was said to give them drink in the morning at the Western spring. But Shakespeare prettily represents him as giving them the morning dew to drink, which lies upon the chalice-shaped flowers.

This joyous mention of the lark introduces a long succession of modern English poems about the bird. But we can quote only some of the best; and we may dismiss the remainder with a few general observations. Most of the really good English poems about the lark are either philosophical or symbolical or both. Why, I am scarcely able to imagine; but I fancy the reason to be that the great poems on the subject date from the close of the eighteenth or the beginning of the nineteenth century, when one or two great singers having set the example of treating the subject reflectively, all the others followed suit. And the tendency strengthens with each generation. The earliest great poem was probably Shelley's—though Wordsworth may have made

* *Cymbeline*, II, iii, 22-30

one skylark poem a little sooner. The last great poem on the subject—philosophically the greatest of all and very much the largest in every way—is George Meredith's, entitled "The Lark Ascending." This is the chief thing to bear in mind about English lark poetry; it is nearly all very serious poetry—poetry of thought even more than poetry of feeling. We may take one of Wordsworth's poems first. There are two; but I will quote only the last one entirely. Of the other an extract or two will suffice.

Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?
Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

To the last point of vision and beyond,
Mount, daring warbler!—that love-prompted strain,
('Twixt thee and thine a never-failing bond),
Thrills not the less the bosom of the plain:
Yet might'st thou seem, proud privilege! to sing
All independent of the leafy Spring.

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine;
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!

This was written in the full maturity of Wordsworth's powers, while his other efforts in the same direction do him less credit. This is really a grand poem, short as it is—though the last thought seems to us a little weak. But even Tennyson could not have surpassed lines such as the first and second of the third stanza, or the third and the fourth of the first stanza. Wordsworth wrote that poem in 1825; and Shelley had written his famous ode "To a Skylark" in 1820. But Wordsworth's first poem on the skylark was

written in 1805 and we may suppose when Shelley's splendid lyric appeared Wordsworth felt ashamed of his first work and tried to do better. He does not even in 1825 come up to Shelley—for Shelley himself was a kind of skylark; but he did very well indeed. Even in his first poem there were some good lines. I quote the following from the verses of 1805:

> Alas! my journey, rugged and uneven,
> Through prickly moors or dusty ways must wind;
> But hearing thee, or others of thy kind,
> As full of gladness and as free of heaven,
> I, with my fate contented, will plod on,
> And hope for higher raptures, when life's day is done.

Now I will not quote to you Shelley's ode partly because I quoted it once before to this very class in a lecture on Shelley*—but chiefly because it is in many of the school-text books; and I think that most of you have read it. But I may tell you that it is worth while to notice the different way in which Shelley felt the delight of the skylark's song. His poem is really very great because he has divined with a poet's instinct that such singing is possible only to a light heart that is very glad and very sincere. And he says that if a man could only get rid of his bad passions—hatred and pride and fear—there would be poetry in the world worthy to compare with the song of the skylark. But as long as men are selfish and bad, the skylark's will always be the best poetry—for he is indeed a "scorner of the ground." That is to say, he cares nothing for what men trouble themselves about incessantly. Even though I do not quote the poem here, let me beg of you to read it again when you have time. Then by comparing it with other poems which I am quoting, you will be able to see what a divine thing it is.

And now I am going to quote the greatest English philosophical poem about the skylark—not all of it, for it is too long, and obscure in parts—but the best of it. It is

* See *On Poets*, pp. 592-5

called "The Lark Ascending," and it is to be found in that volume of George Meredith's poems entitled "Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth."

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,
All intervolved and spreading wide,
Like water-dimples down a tide
Where ripple ripple overcurls
And eddy into eddy whirls;
A press of hurried notes that run
So fleet they scarce are more than one,
Yet changingly the trills repeat
And linger ringing while they fleet.

This is a description of the quality of the lark's song; and it far surpasses in musical accuracy anything of the kind ever attempted by any other English poet. Meredith has no superior in finding words and similes to express complex sensations; and only Browning ever rivalled him in this. His fault is, like Browning's, obscurity.

So much for the notes of the lark; the poet goes on to speak of how they reached the brain through the ear,—and reached the soul through the brain. For the ear, he says, is only a handmaid, a servant; the real hearer of beautiful things is not the ear, but the mind. And to the mind what is the song of the skylark?

It seems the very jet of earth
At sight of sun, her music's mirth,
As up he wings the spiral stair,
A song of light, and pierces air
With fountain ardour, fountain play,
To reach the shining tops of day,

. . . .

Unthinking save that he may give
His voice the outlet, there to live
Renewed in endless notes of glee.
So thirsty of his voice is he.

That song is like a something springing out of the very earth itself,—a gush of life towards the joyful sight of the sun,—the very laughter and music of the sun of the world. So it seems as the lark keeps circling up—circling and circling, like a spirit mounting some spiral stair to heaven. That song is very deep, like a song of light, rising like a luminous fountain, strongly playing, strongly aspiring to reach the very top of day. And all the while the bird is not thinking about doing anything wonderful; he is only expressing the joy of his little heart; he does not want anything in the world except the pleasure of his own singing—except the delight of expressing his delight. As a thirsty man needs water, so only this bird needs song.

Then follows another description of the music, still finer than before, but rather difficult, and we need not quote it all—only this:

> Wider over many heads
> The starry voice ascending spreads,
> Awakening, as it waxes thin,
> The best in us to him akin;
> And every face to watch him raised,
> Puts on the light of children praised,
> So rich our human pleasure ripes
> When sweetness on sincereness pipes,
> Though nought be promised from the seas.

Many people stop work in the fields and look up to watch the lark rising; and his starry voice seems to spread wider as it becomes fainter in ascension. And that high faint sweet sound somehow awakens in the heart of each person the best quality in the heart—the best emotions in us, which are indeed nothing to be compared with the joy of the lark. Whatever in us aspires to heaven is of kinship with the soul of the lark. Look at the faces of the people watching the bird; all those faces are smiling happily just as children smile when we praise them. But why does the song of the bird make us smile? Simply because we are always happy when we see or hear what is sincere mingling

with what is really sweet. The sweetness alone, whether of form or sound, is of little consequence, if it be not made by something which is warm and true. And when we find sincerity and sweetness together, then we become so happy that we do not want anything more—happy like children when they are looking at some wonderful thing. It would not make children any more happy in that moment to offer them a present from beyond the seas. And you do not want anything more from sincerity and sweetness than the pleasure of seeing and hearing them.

But what is the quality of this sweetness and this sincerity in the song of the lark? In other words, what does the song mean? There is nothing mystical about George Meredith when he comes to the study of natural facts. He tells us very plainly that the delight of the song, even while appealing to the mind and to the higher qualities of mind, rests altogether in the *naturalness* of it.

> For singing till his heaven fills,
> 'Tis love of earth that he instils,
> And ever winging up and up,
> Our valley is his golden cup,
> And he the wine which overflows
> To lift us with him as he goes:
> The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine,
> He is, the hills, the human line,
> The meadows green, the fallows brown,
> The dreams of labour in the town;
> He sings the sap, the quickened veins;
> The wedding song of sun and rains
> He is, the dance of children, thanks
> Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,
> And eye of violets while they breathe;
> All these the circling song will wreathe,
> And you shall hear the herb and tree,
> The better heart of men shall see,
> Shall feel celestially, as long
> As you crave nothing save the song.

For while the lark sings and fills all the sky with his

singing, what he is really teaching us is a proper love of earth and of nature. This beautiful world in which we live has been too often called a "Vale of Tears." But it is not a Vale of Tears to the skylark—not at all! To him it is like a great cup of gold, as the sun fills it; and his song is the wine of the cup, which, if we drink, we shall be able to rise heavenward with the singer. The name of that wine is Joy; and it is our duty to be joyful. That lark is in itself an epitome of joy to the world; and his song is the song of the joy of all things—woods and rivers—sheep and cattle—the mountains—the human race—the green valley—the untilled fields—even the dreams of the men who labour in the great city, and long while they labour for the blue sky and the smell of fresh grass. What does he sing of? He sings of spring—the rising of the new sap in the trees—the quickening of blood in the hearts both of men and of birds; he sings the wedding song of sun and rain—the sun and rain of Springtime. Nay! he is himself the song, and he is also the dance of happy children—the happiness of prosperous farmers—the beautiful colour of banks of primrose flowers—the colour so bright that it seems to shout when you look at it;—and he is also the eye of the perfume-breathing violet. All those things you will find repeated and mingled together in his singing. Listen to it properly, and you will hear the grass speak and the trees speak,—and you will see the better side of the hearts of men,—and you will even feel as if you were in heaven, provided that you be contented to hear, and do not allow your mind to be disturbed by a foolish desire for something else.

At this point the poet reminds us of one astounding difference between the charm of a bird's song and the charm of any human utterance. The greatest poet, the greatest musician can only touch the hearts of a chosen few, but the bird can delight every ear that listens to its song of joy. The highest possible form of all human poetry would be that which is at once simple enough to be understood by everybody and sweet enough to touch everybody; that is to

say, it would be like the song of the skylark. This is the teaching also of Tolstoi, about the supreme expression of the highest art; but Meredith wrote this poem long before the Russian writer had composed his famous essay.

Was never voice of ours could say
Our inmost in the sweetest way,
Like yonder voice aloft, and link
All hearers in the song they drink.
Our wisdom speaks from failing blood,
Our passion is too full in flood,
We want the key of his wild note
Of truthful in a tuneful throat,
The song seraphically free
Of taint of personality,
So pure that it salutes the suns
The voice of one for millions,
In whom the millions rejoice
For giving their one spirit voice.

You will see the beauty of this better in the paraphrase, for the verses are suggestive rather than didactic:

"There never was a human voice in our world which could speak the innermost thoughts of the human heart in the most beautiful way possible—as that bird speaks all its heart in the sweetest possible manner. And even if there were such a human voice, it would not be able to speak to all human hearts alike—as that bird can. For wisdom comes to us, poor human beings, only when we are getting old—when our blood is growing chill, and when we do not care to sing. On the other hand, in the time of our youth, when we want to sing—want to write beautiful poetry—then we are too impulsive, too passionate, too selfish, to sing a perfect song. We think too much about ourselves; and that makes us insincere. But there is no insincerity in that bird. If we could but utter the truth of our hearts as he can! There is no selfishness in the song of that bird, nothing of individual desire; such a song is indeed like the song of a seraph, highest of angels—so pure is it, so untouched by the

least personal quality. Only such an impersonal song is suited to express the gratitude of all life to that great Giver of Life, the sun. And that is just what the song does express—one voice speaking for millions of creatures,—and no one of all those millions feeling in the least envious of the singer, but all, on the contrary, loving him for uttering their joy of heart so well."

Now comes, at the close of the poem, the beautiful suggestion that, although we have no human voices so pure and sweet as the voice of the skylark—that is to say, no human poet capable of composing a poem as sincere and as sweet as its song—nevertheless we have at least among us skylark souls:

> Yet men have we, whom we revere,
> Now names, and men still housing here,
> Whose lives, by many a battle-dint
> Defaced, and grinding wheels on flint,
> Yield substance, though they sing not, sweet
> For song our highest heaven to greet:
> Whom heavenly singing gives us new,
> Enspheres them brilliant in our blue,
> From firmest base to farthest leap,
> Because their love of Earth is deep,
> And they are warriors in accord
> With life to serve, and pass reward,
> So touching purest and so heard
> In the brain's reflex of yon bird:
> Wherefore their soul in me, or mine,
> Through self-forgetfulness divine,
> In them, that song aloft maintains,
> To fill the sky and thrill the plains
> With showerings drawn from human stores,
> As he to silence nearer soars,
> Extends the world at wings and dome,
> More spacious making more our home
> Till lost on his aërial rings
> In light, and then the fancy sings.

This is not only difficult poetry to read; it is difficult

even to divide into sentences—just as obscure as anything of Browning, but full of beautiful suggestions. I think this is the meaning—but I am not quite sure about some lines:

"Nevertheless we have men in this world,—some who are dead, and some who are still alive—men whom we reverence greatly, and who may be called our human skylarks. Perhaps they do not sing themselves; but their lives, although very unhappy, yield us material for song worthy to compare with the skylark's song, and worthy of being heard in the highest heaven. And about some of these men great poems have been written; and the names of them remain shining for ever, like stars in the arc of heaven. Why are they beloved and famous? Because they were, or are, great lovers of life and of humanity, and therefore in the eternal struggle they are soldiers whose acts are in accord with the eternal purpose. They performed, or perform, their duty without ever thinking about reward. And their unselfishness enabled them to rise to the highest and purest things—so that when we hear of them, their very names sound in our ears as sweet as the song of a skylark. The spirit of those men, whether in me or in those whom I love, still lives because of their divine unselfishness, and keeps within me a strength of inspiration, sweet as the song of a skylark. But the song of those human souls is of human things; the great poet, singing of human things, resembles the lark in this,—that the world grows larger to him as he nears death, just as to the lark the world seems to be widened and the sky to heighten, the more he ascends towards the heights where all is silence. The poet, thus growing wiser, makes the world appear larger and better to us, through his understanding of it; and when he dies, we still hear his voice and imagine that we can feel the sweetness of his presence. Even so we listen to a skylark singing, until he aspires up out of sight—until he is lost in the great light, and we cannot see him any more. Even then we still imagine that we can hear him sing, after he has really passed out of hearing."

The next bird most worthy to rank after the skylark in the gallery of poetry, is the sea-gull. You have observed, I think, that the poems about the skylark all tell us about the sense of joy which the bird's song gives. The sea-gull gives us the sensation also of joy, but of a very different kind of joy—the joy of perfect freedom. The joy of the lark is in its singing, the joy of the sea-gull is in its wings. No poet could praise the cry of the sea-gull—not at least of an English sea-gull; for the note is very harsh and unpleasant. I believe in Japan the cry of the gull is considered a melancholy sound. Some kinds of gulls utter cries much like the cry of a cat, and they are not inexpressively called by the name of "mews."

You might ask, why should the sea-gull be considered as a type of freedom in preference to the eagle or some other bird of prey? The eagle and the hawk and many kinds of vultures are indeed types of freedom of a certain kind; but they are not birds which revel in storms and follow in the wake of tempests. I am not speaking of the sea-eagle, nor of the albatross, nor of the frigate-bird; these indeed revel in the tempest quite as boldly as the sea-gull, or even more so. But they are much less familiar birds—poets do not so often have the chance of seeing them. Neither do poets catch sight of that most wonderful little creature which sailors call the "stormy petrel" or "Mother Carey's chicken,"—a tiny creature which can be seen dancing over the waves in time of great storm, hundreds of miles away from land. But sea-gulls can be seen everywhere, and the freedom of the bird to fly in the face of the storm, to dive into rising surge, to play perpetually with death and yet remain unharmed, could not but impress any poetical imagination. Other birds need at least a home, a mountain-top or tree, a hollow of some sort in which to dwell. But the sea-gull appears to be independent of all wants, except air and sea. The best poem in English on this bird is Swinburne's "To a Seamew." It is too long for complete quotation; I can give extracts only. But it is not too much

to say that Shelley himself could not have equalled this; indeed, he is the only poet in English literature who ever accomplished anything to compare with it.

When I had wings, my brother,
  Such wings were mine as thine;
Such life my heart remembers
In all as wild Septembers
As this when life seems other,
  Though sweet, than once was mine;
When I had wings, my brother,
  Such wings were mine as thine.

Such life as thrills and quickens
  The silence of thy flight,
Or fills thy note's elation
With lordlier exultation
Than man's, whose faint heart sickens
  With hopes and fears that blight
Such life as thrills and quickens
  The silence of thy flight.

Thy cry from windward clanging
  Makes all the cliffs rejoice;
Though storm clothe seas with sorrow,
Thy call salutes the morrow;
While shades of pain seem hanging
  Round earth's most rapturous voice,
Thy cry from windward clanging
  Makes all the cliffs rejoice.

We, sons and sires of seamen,
  Whose home is all the sea,
What place man may, we claim it;
But thine – whose thought may name it?
Free birds live higher than freemen,
  And gladlier ye than we—
We, sons and sires of seamen,
  Whose home is all the sea.

In reading this poem, one can scarcely forget that the poet is a descendant of a great seaman, and that Admiral

Swinburne was one of his immediate ancestors. I do not mean to say that he wishes the reader to know this—not at all; but the fact is worth remembering. The beginning of the poem is a sort of reminiscence of former lives, however—not of the time when the soul of the poet was in the body of the seaman, but in the body of a sea-bird; and the poet continues—

"We Englishmen are the descendants and also the fathers of seamen; and we are the sons and the fathers of men who called the whole sea their home. Indeed, whatever right poor human beings can have to call the sea their home, we Englishmen may justly claim that right. But our right to call the sea our home—what is it compared with yours? What man can even imagine the whole extent of your claim to that privilege? We call ourselves free Englishmen; we are proud of being freemen; but the free bird is higher than the freeman, and more joyful is the bird's life."

There are times indeed when even Englishmen might be inclined to doubt their right to the sea—times of storm in which no ship can live. But in such a time the sea-gull is especially joyful; for the storm brings wreck and death and plenty of good things to eat—though Swinburne does not exactly say so.

The sea and the storm-wind can terrify man; no matter how brave we may be, there are moments when, face to face with death, we feel affrighted. The bravest soldier even knows what it is to be afraid,—fear being a natural emotion which no amount of reason can extinguish. Every man, except a fool of the most foolish kind, is subject to fear,—we call "brave" the man who, in spite of this natural emotion, acts in the face of danger just as if there were no danger at all. He is brave by force of will. But in the face of storm, when man needs all his bravery, the sea-gull only seems to rejoice.

For you the storm sounds only
More notes of more delight
Than earth's in sunniest weather:
When heaven and sea together

Join strengths against the lonely
  Lost bark borne down by night,
For you the storm sounds only
  More notes of more delight.

With wider wing, and louder
  Long clarion-call of joy,
Thy tribe salutes the terror
Of darkness, wild as error,
But sure as truth, and prouder
  Than waves with man for toy;
With wider wing, and louder
  Long clarion-call of joy.

The wave's wing spreads and flutters,
  The wave's heart swells and breaks;
One moment's passion thrills it,
One pulse of power fulfils it
And ends the pride it utters
  When, loud with life that quakes,
The wave's wing spreads and flutters,
  The wave's heart swells and breaks.

But thine and thou, my brother,
  Keep heart and wing more high
Than aught may scare or sunder;
The waves whose throats are thunder
Fall hurtling each on other,
  And triumph as they die;
But thine and thou, my brother,
  Keep heart and wing more high.

More high than wrath or anguish,
  More strong than pride or fear,
Than sense or soul half hidden
In thee, for us forbidden,
Bids thee nor change nor languish,
  But live thy life as here,
More high than wrath or anguish,
  More strong than pride or fear.

The poet makes the comparison between the conception of life, as man has it, and the sense of life the bird has;

man is less obedient to the eternal law than is the bird. And therefore man is weaker than the bird, and may take from it a great example, a great moral lesson. What is life but a great sea—the sea of birth and death—and we but as birds upon the shores of it? We always complain if the weather be stormy. We want perpetual rest, everlasting summer weather, eternal calm. That is why we are so unhappy in this world; we want the impossible, something contrary to the laws of the universe. The sea cannot be eternally calm, —for that were death; life is a sea that must be in perpetual agitation, must be purified by storm. Very different is the soul of the sea-bird; it is most happy when the storm comes.

We are fallen, even we, whose passion
  On earth is nearest thine;
Who sing, and cease from flying;
Who live, and dream of dying:
Grey time, in time's grey fashion,
  Bids wingless creatures pine:
We are fallen, even we, whose passion
  On earth is nearest thine.

That is to say, "We, the poets, who of all men are nearest to the sea-birds in love of freedom, and joy of earth, and perception of nature's laws,—even we the poets are half cowards. We are afraid to live. We sing, but soon get tired. We seek pleasure—but we are always thinking about death. Perhaps it is because we have no wings; and as we become old, we feel more and more our helplessness in the struggle with nature's forces. But to you, O sea-bird, the struggle is joy, the fight is only triumph."

The lark knows no such rapture,
  Such joy no nightingale,
As sways the songless measure
Wherein thy wings take pleasure:
Thy love may no man capture,
  Thy pride may no man quail;
The lark knows no such rapture,
  Such joy no nightingale.

And we, whom dreams embolden,
  We can but creep and sing
And watch through heaven's waste hollow
The flight no sight may follow
To the utter bourne beholden
  Of none that lack thy wing:
And we, whom dreams embolden,
  We can but creep and sing.

Our dreams have wings that falter;
  Our hearts bear hopes that die;
For thee no dream could better
A life no fears may fetter,
A pride no care can alter,
  That wots not whence nor why.

. . . .

Ah, well were I for ever,
  Wouldst thou change lives with me,
And take my song's wild honey,
And give me back thy sunny
Wide eyes that weary never,
  And wings that search the sea;
Ah, well were I for ever,
  Wouldst thou change lives with me.

This is a very noble poem—so fine, indeed, that it would be a pity to quote any other on the same subject. Indeed there is no other English poem about sea-birds even faintly comparable to it. I had better now turn to the subject of miscellaneous poems about birds of different kinds. Something about cranes (storks, if you like) ought to have a Japanese interest. Perhaps this is the prettiest, a little composition by Lord De Tabley (John Leicester Warren), who was a great poet:

THE PILGRIM CRANES

The pilgrim cranes are moving to their south,
  The clouds are herded pale and rolling slow.
One flower is withered in the warm wind's mouth,
  Whereby the gentle waters always flow.

The cloud-fire wanes beyond the lighted trees.
  The sudden glory leaves the mountain dome.
Sleep into night, old anguish mine, and cease
  To listen for a step that will not come.

It is especially the sight of these birds flying against the sky that has impressed Western poets; but the mournful cry is also often referred to in verse. For instance, Longfellow, in describing the death of Balder, speaks of the cry announcing the death of the god as being—

Like the mournful cry
Of sunward sailing cranes.

Otherwise, however, the crane or stork figures little in poetry. It chiefly appears as a detail of the landscape,—a part of a description of nature, or of the emotion aroused by nature.

And this is the case with many other birds—even in the poems of Wordsworth. Wordsworth has poems on the thrush, the robin redbreast, the linnet, and the skylark,—besides the poems already quoted about the cuckoo and the nightingale. But I do not think that any of these are important enough to quote; they do not show Wordsworth at his best, or else they are not intimately connected with our subject. The poem on the thrush is very beautiful; but I quoted it to you last year*—it is about a country girl employed as a servant in London, who hears a thrush singing in a cage, and suddenly remembers her home in the country, where she heard the same bird singing in the time she was a little child. The poems about the linnet and the redbreast are not very good—they are prosaic. Also Wordsworth has a poem about an eagle which is not very good—though there is a notable moral in it. It is entitled "Eagles." While visiting Dunollie Castle, Wordsworth saw an eagle in a cage and pitied it. One day it escaped; and he was very glad. But the bird had been in the cage for years, and it flew away and was frightened at its new freedom and came

* See *On Poets* pp. 509-11.

back again to slavery. So that little incident inspired Wordsworth to write his poem—which is really a poem about the evil consequences of slavery. As for eagle poetry, I think there is nothing much better than Tennyson's six lines:

> He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
> Close to the sun in lonely lands,
> Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.
>
> The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
> He watches from his mountain walls,
> And like a thunderbolt he falls.

These lines on the eagle are greatly admired—and they ought to be. Nobody could have written them who had not studied a landscape from the top of some very high mountain. When you stand upon such a height, and look about you, of course the world looks much larger than when you are below; but that is not all—it also looks blue. All the distances are beautifully blue, and the horizon enormously wide and enormously high. Then, if you look at the sea, you will observe that its waves only appear like tiny wrinkles which move very, very slowly, with a crawling motion as of an insect. By standing upon the top of Fuji, for example, we may imagine imperfectly how the world looks to the eagle from the top of a peak. But, remember, we can only imagine it imperfectly; for no man, even with a good telescope, can see as an eagle sees. It has the extraordinary power of being able to change the shape of the lens in its eye at will,—so as to obtain the focus for any distance from a mile to ninety miles. From the top of Fuji, for example, you can hardly see a large tree in the plain below. But an eagle could see from ten times that height even a little mouse running along the ground. Still this poem is great, because it gives us the sensation of seeing from a height according to our human senses, though not according to the power of an eagle.

Longfellow has been a great poet of birds. He has a

poem about herons—but that is a local legend; also a poem about the crossbill; also poems about various kinds of American as well as European birds. It is no use to quote these, for Longfellow is readily accessible, and he is not difficult to study. But I may mention something about the story of a crossbill. The crossbill is a bird whose beak is differently shaped from that of other birds, and it has a red spot on its breast. The lower bill and the upper do not touch throughout their length, but cross each other when closed, so that the beak looks crooked. There is a pretty Christian story to account for the shape. It is said that when Christ was dying on the cross, a little bird came and tried to pull out the nails which had been driven through his hands, and continued to pull until its beak was twisted and broken, and its breast covered with blood from the throat. So Christ blessed it, and said that all men who loved him should also love that bird in aftertime. This pretty story formed the subject of a Danish poem, and Longfellow made a good translation of it. But of all Longfellow's poems about birds, I think the best is that entitled "The Emperor's Bird's-Nest." It is founded upon a story told about the Emperor Charles V. He was by no means a lovable emperor; there was a great deal of cunning and cruelty in his character, and he showed no scruple at all in dealing with those whom he found in his way. He was a religious persecutor—the father of that still more cruel and superstitious Philip II of Spain; and both he and his son would have put the whole world under the rule of the infamous inquisition if they could have done so. Philip II indeed bankrupted Spain in trying to do that. But this terrible Charles had sometimes gleams of kindness in his nature,—kindness of a surprising kind. He ordered a man to be burned alive for heresy; but he could be kind to little birds. That is what the poem is about—and it is a pretty poem. First we have an account of the dreadful weather in Flanders, when Charles and his Spanish soldiers were making war; and the Spanish officers were in very bad humour because of the rains, and the con-

dition of the country, which rendered military operations excessively difficult. They were besieging a town and they could not take it. Suddenly those officers observed that a swallow had her nest made on the top of the Emperor's tent. That was a very extraordinary thing—for it was the very last place in the world where a nest would have been safe:

Yes, it was a swallow's nest,
  Built of clay and hair of horses,
Mane, or tail, or dragoon's crest,
Found on hedgerows east and west,
  After skirmish of the forces.

Then an old Hidalgo said,
  As he twirled his gray moustachio,
"Sure this swallow overhead
Thinks the Emperor's tent a shed,
  And the Emperor but a Macho!"

The word "macho" in Spanish means a mule;—the Hidalgo suggests that the bird might have supposed the Emperor's tent a mule's stable. He did not think that the Emperor was listening, but Charles overheard this reference to his obstinacy of character, and he looked up and saw the nest. But when he saw it he was pleased, and gave orders that nobody should annoy the bird.

"Let no hand the bird molest,"
  Said he solemnly, "nor hurt her!"
Adding then, by way of jest,
"Golondrina is my guest,
  'Tis the wife of some deserter!"

"Golondrina" in Spanish means a swallow. But soldiers who deserted used to be jokingly described as swallows. So the Emperor, by using the feminine of the word, made an excellent pun, suggesting that the wife of some one of his deserting soldiers had come to the camp in spirit to atone for the fault of her husband.

And when the camp was being removed and the men came to pull down the Emperor's tent and carry it away, the Emperor ordered the men to leave the tent standing there, for the sake of the swallow.

So unharmed and unafraid
  Sat the swallow still and brooded,
Till the constant cannonade
Through the walls a breach had made
  And the siege was thus concluded.

Then the army, elsewhere bent,
  Struck its tents as if disbanding,
Only not the Emperor's tent,
For he ordered, ere he went,
  Very curtly, "Leave it standing!"

So it stood there all alone,
  Loosely flapping, torn and tattered,
Till the brood was fledged and flown,
Singing o'er those walls of stone
  Which the cannon-shot had shattered.

In many pictures—emblematic pictures—of Peace, I think you have seen birds represented building their nest in the mouth of abandoned cannon; it is really a fact that birds do such things. In time of war also, once they know that nobody desires to hurt them, they will build their nest even where heavy batteries are firing. They seem to take life very philosophically indeed. Does not this story of the grim Charles V remind you of the story of Mahomet and his cat? Mahomet was very fond of cats; and one of his favourites happened to be sleeping beside him one day when the call to prayer sounded. Mahomet was about to rise, when he found the cat was lying upon a part of his dress, so that he could not get up without disturbing it—unless he did the thing which he is celebrated for doing. Rather than wake the cat he cut off that part of his robe on which the cat was sleeping, and then went to the house of prayer.

You will find other poems about birds in Longfellow for

yourself without any trouble, but please do not forget to read his little romance in verse called "The Falcon of Ser Federigo." This is a version of the beautiful Italian story which Tennyson also treated in verse under the title of "The Falcon." But Tennyson treats the story dramatically, and Longfellow only turns it into a charming narrative, and exquisite as Tennyson's verse is, I think you would prefer Longfellow's poem. I need not quote from either of them; this would not particularly help the general subject of the lecture, for both are much too long to permit of adequate quotation, and there are no passages of such exceptional value as to justify the quotation of a few lines. So I shall only tell this old Italian story—old, I believe, as the time of Boccaccio. There was a gentleman who had a tame hawk or falcon, of which he was very fond—a bird so intelligent that it would do almost anything which he told it to do. In the neighbourhood where he lived there also lived a beautiful lady—a widow, whom he loved very much and wished to marry; but as she happened to be of superior rank, it was difficult for him to win her. She had a little boy of five or six years old; and one day, in company with this little boy, she paid a visit to the owner of the falcon. The boy was very much astonished and delighted by the intelligence and beauty of the bird. Some time after he fell sick; and while sick he asked his mother to give him the falcon of Ser Federigo. The mother at once went alone to the house of Ser Federigo to ask for the bird. But, according to the rules of Italian courtesy, she could not make the request immediately upon arrival; it was necessary first to accept the hospitality of the house. Now the knight happened to have no good food in the castle at the time. He therefore secretly killed the falcon, and cooked it, and gave the fair lady a very nice dinner. After the dinner she ventured to ask him to let her have the hawk for the sick boy's sake. In great pain he answered that he could not. She imagined that his refusal was merely selfish—a proof that he did not really love her. And she was about to go away, very un-

happy, when the knight, divining her thoughts, confessed to her that he had already killed the hawk for her sake, and that was the reason why he could not give it. On learning the truth, the lady herself loved him for his courtesy and tact and generosity; and the result was a happy marriage. Probably a score of poems as well as prose versions of the story have been inspired by the Italian original; and that Tennyson should find it a worthy subject in the later years of his life ought to be sufficient proof of its value.

I believe that these are the most noteworthy poems about the hawk or falcon, in English literature. But there are many old ballads and songs about hawks; and you will find several of them in the ordinary anthologies. I do not quote any of them because, as in the case of "The Gay Goshawk," the birds of these ballads are magical birds—hawks that tell stories and carry letters, and act so much like human beings that there is nothing of the bird left in their character. Speaking of Longfellow, I must, however, remind you of another American poet who wrote a very famous poem about a bird—perhaps the only poem by which he will be permanently remembered. Bryant's poem "To a Waterfowl" you will meet with even in school readers, and I believe, in all the anthologies especially compiled for children. The verse is really very fine and musical, the language pure and richly coloured. But there is nothing particularly thoughtful in the poem,—indeed, its subject, the homing instinct of the bird, is theologically accounted for, after the fashion of the eighteenth century. It is a good school poem, for very young children; and that is about all that need be said concerning it.

As for birds in general, I do not know of any more remarkable poem than Arnold's "Lines Written in Kensington Gardens." Kensington Gardens is the name of one of the great parks in London. I think you know that the Zoological Garden and other famous institutions are situated in that neighbourhood. There are beautiful trees there and grass and flowers, and many birds. All about the garden is the

roar of the city, like the sound of the sea; but within the gardens there is light and peace and blue air. The poem which I am going to quote, describes the thoughts of a man who listens to the singing of birds in this place,—in the heart of London.

In this lone open glade I lie,
Screen'd by deep boughs on either hand;
And at its end, to stay the eye,
Those black-crown'd, red-boled pine-trees stand.

Birds here make song, each bird has his,
Across the girdling city's hum.
How green under the boughs it is!
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come!

Sometimes a child will cross the glade
To take his nurse his broken toy;
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead
Deep in her unknown day's employ.

Here at my feet what wonders pass,
What endless, active life is here!
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass!
An air-stirr'd forest, fresh and clear.

Scarce fresher is the mountain sod
Where the tired angler lies, stretch'd out,
And, eased of basket and of rod,
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

In the huge world which roars hard by
Be others happy, if they can!
But in my helpless cradle I
Was breathed on by the rural Pan.

I, on men's impious uproar hurl'd,
Think often, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world,
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace for ever new!
When I, who watch them, am away,

Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass;
The flowers close, the birds are fed,
The night comes down upon the grass,
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar!

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give!
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.

The last stanza but one,—and the most beautiful in the poem, refers to that peace of mind and heart which pious moral wisdom gives, the peace that is obtained through self-control. Just as that part in the heart of noisy London contains within itself a peace like that of the country, so a brave man of good understanding, though obliged to work and suffer among men who do not think rightly or uprightly, may keep in his own heart a certain heavenly peace and resignation and love for humanity. The words "before I have begun to live," really mean "before I have begun to live the higher moral life, which teaches us not to complain and never to hate." You might ask whether this is really a bird-poem—because birds are only mentioned three or four times in it. But originally this poem was entitled "On Hearing a Bird's Singing in Kensington Gardens;" and the whole composition appears to have been inspired as stated.

I believe that I have given you the cream, at least, of the English poetry about birds. But I need scarcely tell you that the subject is far from being exhausted. There are hosts of other poems about birds—not only English poems about English birds, but also English poems about foreign

birds. They are not, however, of a high order, and we must leave the inferior orders alone for the present, or let them be sufficiently represented by a reference. Cowper's poem about the crow is not a second rate poem; but the kind is the humorous kind, and I quoted the poem for you last year. Thomson's poem contained lines about every kind of English bird—I refer especially to his descriptions of awakening life in "Spring"—and Thomson is a great poet. But he cannot be justly represented here by a few lines, and it would be of small use to quote him by pages. Otherwise I doubt whether anything important has been overlooked.

I might mention, however, that some birds belong to literature in an emblematical way which might be worth some private study. The dove, for example, has long been the Christian emblem of the Holy Ghost—you may have remarked one beautiful reference to this in Rossetti's poem of "The Blessed Damozel." But I do not dwell on this matter, simply because it is most intimately related to Christian iconography, which is a subject for the specialist. Neither have I said much about the likening of angels to birds; or about the white wings given to angels in pictures and paintings. That also belongs to iconography. However, you should at least remember the fact—otherwise you could scarcely appreciate the charming surprise of Browning's delightful address to the angel in the painting—"Thou bird of God!"*

In conclusion I think this much may be said: English poetry about birds represents a very large proportion of lyrical expression of the highest order. It is emotional or meditative poetry of the most complex kind at its best. Perhaps there is no other simple subject which poets have treated in a higher and more complex way.

* *The Guardian-Angel—a Picture at Fano*

CHAPTER XXV

POEMS OLD AND NEW, NOT ENGLISH, IN RELATION TO THE MOON

IN the general class, and in relation to the topic of night, I am going to give a number of English poems about the moon. But I must tell you that the English poems upon this subject are not nearly so interesting or so beautiful as the moon poems of other literatures. Old Greek poems, modern Greek poems, Italian poems and French poems about the moon are incomparably better. And in this special class we can very well take up subjects not exactly suitable to the larger miscellaneous class. So I shall begin this lecture with something about the Greek poems on the moon, and afterwards give you examples translated from other languages —not forgetting to use an English poem when appropriate to the subject.

Of course when we go back to ancient classic times we must expect to find the moon regarded as a person,—a divinity; and the poems about her are liable to be of a mythological character only. We cannot expect, indeed, to find good moon poetry in an astronomical age,—not at least just now. We have maps of the moon showing us the dried-up seas, the long extinct volcanoes, the waterless river courses; —we know that the moon is a waste of sand and stone, the dried-up corpse of a world; and to-day it reminds us only of the unpleasant fact, that our world is inevitably destined to die and dry up and crumble in just the same manner. So the moon does not now inspire us so much with pleasant ideas as with unpleasant fancies. But in the time when mankind did not know anything about the moon, and imagined her to be a goddess, the moon was indeed an endless

source of poetical inspiration. After all, science has destroyed for us a great deal of happy imagination; and we can only find consolation for this in the certainty that scientific knowledge must, at some later day, supply us with a larger and higher form of poetical suggestion. Yet I fear that time is far off.

The moon was especially in old times a source of inspiration for poems of a tender and melancholy character,—and indeed she has been an inspiration for melancholy poetry even in our own time. But the tender side of moon poetry deserves attention first; it has a more intimate relation to what is unchanging in human nature. As the special goddess of lovers, the moon has remained for thousands of years a source of imaginative and tender literature, both popular and refined.

I think that you all know that the Greeks had different moon goddesses, or rather that same goddess of the moon was considered by them to have various forms and attributes. Certainly Artemis, the stern goddess of chastity, was not a patron of lovers. Yet Artemis was identified with the moon both by the Greeks and Romans who called her Diana. However, Selene was also identified with the moon;—was it not she who kissed the sleeping shepherd Endymion? And Selene was especially the Lady of Lovers. It might seem to you that there is a plain contradiction in such mythologies. Well, there are contradictions in all mythologies and we need not trouble ourselves about them. But observe that as the Lady of Lovers Selene was prayed to especially—mostly by girls whose lovers had deserted them. And for this reason she is not so far removed by her attributes from that bright Artemis whose office it was to *protect* the chastity of maidens.

Now the worship of Selene is not even yet entirely dead in Greece. Greek girls—presumably those who have not studied astronomy at the new public school still sing hymns to her in the remote country districts. Is not this a very interesting survival of a very ancient faith? Such songs are sung partly as incantation;—the moon is asked to avenge

the girl whose lover has been cruel, or to bring him back to his duty without a changed heart. Listen to one of the little songs in question, and see how pretty it is, and how expressive of human nature:—

> Bright golden moon that art near to thy setting, go thou and salute my lover,—he that stole my love, and that kissed me, and that said, "Never will I leave thee!" and lo, he has left me like a field reaped and gleaned, like a church where no man comes to pray, like a city desolate. Therefore, would I curse him, and yet again my heart fails me for tenderness. My heart is vexed within me, my spirit is moved with anguish. Nay even so I will lay my curses on him, and let God do even as He will,—with my pain and with my crying, with my flame, and with mine implications.

You will see a mixture of the pagan with the Christian element here: the old moon incantation is still believed in; but the Christian god is also asked to help the deserted maiden. How old the incantation, it were hard to say. Very possibly it may be even ten thousand years old, or older: but we have a version of it dating only from the time of Theocritus. When Theocritus wrote his "Second Idyl" in which the text of the incantation is placed—about two hundred and seventy five or three hundred years before Christ—the custom of thus praying to the moon was already thousands of years old. Let me quote to you some extracts from the prose version of the moon song as given by Theocritus:—

> Go thou, Selene, shine clear and fair, for, softly Goddess, to thee will I sing. Bethink thee of my love, and whence it came, my Lady Moon! Even as I looked, I loved, loved madly, and all my heart was wounded. Woe is me and my beauty began to wane. Bethink thee of my love, and whence it came, my Lady Moon!

The girls of the time of Theocritus performed particular rites while praying to the moon in this way, and relat-

ed the whole story of their affection and their sorrow. Some of these rites may possibly have been learned from Asiatic sources. But the principal idea and feeling expressed in the "Second Idyl" is altogether Greek, and probably quite as old as the Greek race.

But to these lines I refer principally for the purpose of showing how very ancient is the relation of the moon to Western love poetry. The relation of the moon to the poetry of sorrow and regret is rather modern. I am not enough of a scholar to tell you how much poetry of the latter kind on the subject of the moon may be found in Greek literature. But the most remarkable moon poetry of the sorrowful sort is certainly much later than the poetry of love; and I think that I am right in calling it especially a modern growth—so far as Europe is concerned. It is not so as regards the Far East. I have read many French translations of old Chinese poetry about the moon—verses probably older than European civilization; and among these verses I found some very distinctive and impressive compositions of a sorrowful kind. But in European poetry, as I told you before, the great poetry of this class is modern—almost recent. One would expect especially to find it in a period of pessimistic philosophy—in the period, for example, of Schopenhauer. And that is just about the time when we do find it. There must have been poetry of the same kind before; but this is the time of the famous verses of Leopardi.

Giacomo Leopardi is thought by very good judges to be the greatest Italian poet after Dante. This is saying a great deal; and I do not think that any one but an Italian, or a man having a perfect knowledge of Italian literature, could exactly show you what it is that makes Leopardi so greatly important. He wrote very little: and all his pieces are short. It is not the thought of the poem, nor the feeling of the poem only, that gives the poet his rank—especially in Latin literature form is insisted upon, and I understand that the great wonder of Leopardi is the perfection

and melody of his form. You must try to think of him as a classic poet—that is, one who models all his work upon the best Greek and Roman conceptions of poetry, as well as upon a profound knowledge of all the great Italian poets that preceded him. It is the severe perfection of his verse, and the melancholy charm of its faultless music that causes him to be so highly esteemed. He is rather modern; for he was born in 1798 and died in 1837, so that he partly belongs to the last century, and was a contemporary of Tennyson. His life was very, very unhappy—owing to extraordinary circumstances. He was the son of a noble family; and his parents were very religious, very stern and very severe. They brought him up so strictly that he had known no pleasure in his childhood. No youth, no joy. Grown up, to live with those parents became impossible for him; and yet to support himself was no easy matter. By hard study he had become a wonderful scholar, an astonishing scholar; but his health would not allow of energetic work,—would not allow him, for example, to fill certain educational positions requiring constant effort. He was obliged to content himself with easier labour at a small salary,—working as librarian, as secretary, occasionally as translator. His health had probably been ruined by the very cruel way in which he was brought up. He was very sensitive and affectionate; and this made his first great sorrow in adult life almost unbearable for him. He fell in love with some handsome person, who encouraged his hopes only to amuse herself, and then left him to despair. At the age of thirty-nine he died of consumption. All his poetry was written about his own emotions and sorrows. He wrote poems about the women he loved or admired; he wrote poems about sickness and old age, about loss of strength and loss of hope, about death as being the end of all things, about life as being an illusion and a mockery. If you know the history of his own pains, and then read his poems, you cannot help sympathizing with them. But if you should not know anything of his personal history, then his poems would seem very morbid

indeed. Morbid they are—and you know the word "morbid" means "sickly." But there are particular forms of beauty—beauty of form and beauty of feeling (beauty of aspect), which are associated with sickly conditions, with excessive sensibility of the nerves. Any doctor of experience can tell you about that. So the Italians who are the most artistic people in the world, called particular kinds of beauty, or rather particular qualities of beauty, by the strange word "morbidezza" signifying a form arrived at only through excessive sensibility, such as sickness makes. Now there is a particular beauty in the poetry of Leopardi which can better be qualified by this word of morbidezza.

That is enough to say about Leopardi. Among his poems there are two very celebrated pieces about the moon. These are, I think, the most remarkable examples in Western literature of melancholy poems about the moon. Therefore I think that we should know them. The first is the famous composition beginning with the beautiful phrase "O graziosa luna." This I shall now attempt to translate in English prose from the French translation in prose by Professor Carré, which is probably the best translation yet made in any European language. The French translations are nearly always more successful than the English; and one reason of this is that they only make prose translations of great poems, artistically understanding that only the very greatest poet can make a worthy translation in verse:—

> O gracious moon, I remember that just one year ago I came here to the top of this hill, full of anguish to look upon you;—and in that time you were hovering, even as you hover now, above that forest, which you fully illuminated with your beams. But your face then appeared to my eyes all clouded and trembling, seen through the tears which came to the edge of my eye-lids,—for my life was tormented then, and it is tormented still, and it does not change, O my beloved moon. And nevertheless it pleases me to remember,—it gives me pleasure to calculate the age of my sorrow. Oh! in the time of youth, when the

> path to be taken is still long to hope and short to memory —then how pleasant it is to remember things gone by, even though they be sad, and that the sorrow must endure!

Moonlight is particularly apt to become associated with very painful or very pleasant memories, partly perhaps because of the comparative rarity of beautiful nights and of our natural inclination to profit by them when they occur. Thoughts like these no doubt occur in all literature; but they seldom have been so touchingly and so deeply expressed.

Yet a still sadder poem on the same subject, and a still more artistic poem has been given to us by this author. It is entitled "The Setting of the Moon." It is worth knowing, and I shall try to give you a prose translation. But you must remember that three-fourths of the beauty necessarily vanishes in any translation, unless the translator should happen to be a poet as great as Leopardi himself; all I can attempt to do is to give you the thought of the poem, more or less imperfectly.

> When, upon some still night,—above the fields and the silvered waters, which the south wind caressingly touches with his wing,—and where the shallows take in the distance a thousand vague aspects, a thousand forms of illusion, in the midst of calm waters, the masses of foliage, the hills, and the villas;—when, on such a night, the moon, reaching the edge of the sky, descends behind the Apennines or the Alps, or into the infinite bosom of the Tyrrhenian Sea: then the world loses its colours, all the shadows disappear, and one universal obscurity envelops alike the valley and the mountain. Then the night becomes a funeral darkness; and, on the high road, the waggoner proceeds singing as he goes and saluting with his plaintive song, the last gleam of that dying light which had been serving as a guide upon his way.

I fancy that in nearly all countries with an agricultural population the little picture of the waggoner or farmer, here given, would be equally true. In Italy it was true three

thousand years ago: old Latin poets sang of the farmer going into town early in the morning before sunrise and singing on their way. And in the suburbs of this city, every morning we see the same thing: but we seldom stop to think how ancient it is, nor how in a thousand years to come farmers will still make their morning journey singing under the moon and the stars.

> Even so does youth vanish away,—even so does she desert the mortal life of man. The beautiful shadows, the phantoms of all, flee away; and in like manner equally disappear those far-off hopes on which poor human nature for a time depends. Life becomes desolate and dark. And the traveller on life's journey then vainly seeks to perceive either the object or the end of that long road which still remains to be travelled. And he sees that the sojourn of mankind will henceforth for ever appear a strange land to him and that he himself is there only a stranger.

You must read the first part of the description carefully in order to perceive the extraordinary and complex beauty of this melancholy imagery. The poet has likened the vigour and joy of youth to pure moonlight and life to a landscape. The high hills in the horizon represent hopes of happy things to come; the shadows and the glitter of light upon the waters, these are illusions—illusions of bliss, success, joy. When youth passes,—all the force of life passing with it,—then the world no longer seems so beautiful to the feeble man. He is like a traveller who has been travelling by moonlight, but who sees the moon set before he has half completed the journey.

> It must have seemed to the powers on high that our miserable lot would be too blissful, too happy, if the time of youth—in which even the least happiness is only obtained at the cost of a thousand pains, should last during the whole period of life. Even the terrible law by which all living creatures are condemned to die would seem too gentle if the afterpart of life were not made for living

> beings even much more dreadful than dreadful death itself. The immortals therefore imagined a supreme evil,—an imagination well worthy of eternal intelligences, and that imagination was old age—old age in which desire remains strong, though all hope be dead,—in which the sources of pleasure are all dried up,—and in which the pain becomes ever greater and still greater, though no happiness can ever come again.
>
> You, O hills and shores,—after the passing of the light that silvers the veil of darkness from the West,—even after the passing of that moonlight, you do not long remain desolate, O hills and shores. Soon from the opposite side of the sky you again behold heaven illuminated,—you behold the dawn arise, and the great sun shooting his mighty beams in all directions, and irradiating with torrents of light all the ethereal fields. But human life, after the passing of beautiful youth, is never again coloured by any other light,—is never again made rosy by the glow of another dawn. Widowed for ever she remains. And there is not any end to the night that follows after except that end which the gods have set thereunto—the tomb.

Reading this poem you need not be at all shocked by the pessimism of it,—observe only the beauty of the comparisons. It is a sinister beauty; but it is certainly beauty. The pessimism of Leopardi is the most innocent kind of pessimism imaginable; it is only the result of his ill health and unhappiness; and he is not speaking for the rest of the world but only for himself. So that the feeling with which we read his poem ought to be one of great compassion and pity. Think of the sorrow of a young scholar, mentally superior to almost all the men of his time in knowledge of esthetic literature, but rendered an old man at the age of thirty, and full of knowledge that no matter what he did or what doctor comes to help him he must very soon die. Even this will not excuse the despair on the part of the man having duty to perform—duty to others: father, mother, younger brothers or sisters. But this poor lad had not even the consolation of duty to perform. Cruelly treated by his

parents and practically banished from their home, separated from all who were dear to him, altogether alone, refused the hope of marriage for excellent reasons: one would scarcely expect this genius to think well of the eternal order of things. But we should remember that only in his poetry did he venture to express his pain. Otherwise he lived and suffered in silence; and we must believe that many of his verses were written as a moral exercise against suffering.

CHAPTER XXVI

POEMS ON NIGHT, THE MOON AND THE STARS

EARLY last term, one of my pupils asked me for a list of poems about the moon; and at that time I determined to give a lecture about moon poetry as soon as possible. But I did not find the material quite so easily as I expected. Even now I must tell you that I have given up the idea of attempting a separate lecture about moon poetry. The subject is, with Western poets, too intimately related to the subject of night for any separate treatment which could have much literary significance. So this lecture will be rather upon the subject of night, generally speaking, than about the lights of heaven. But you will find the best moon poems scattered through it, and afterwards you can separate them if you wish. But I do not think that will be worth doing.

Compared with the multitude of Japanese and of Chinese poems about the moon, the number of good English poems on the same subject is rather small. Of course one could make an anthology of parts of poems about the moon—single lines, or fragments of two or three lines long. But the literary value of such little fragments would be chiefly a value of adjectives and verbs; in other words, a value depending upon form and upon choice of words, rather than upon thought and feeling. For English students such a collection of small fragments might have word-value; for you it would have scarcely any value at all—because to you the worth of Western poetry must be in idea and in feeling, not in artistic word-carving.

So I shall quote complete poems only, and only those containing ideas of a striking character.

The subject of night is necessarily the most sublime of all possible poetry; for the most sublime of all sights is the sight of the night sky. Let me be sure, to begin with, that you clearly understand the meaning of the word "sublime." It is often used by students with a very imperfect knowledge of its significance. The sublime in nature, in art, or in utterance is not the beautiful, nor is it the great, nor is it the grand. It is much more than beautiful, than great, or than grand. It is that which gives the deepest and largest of all emotional feelings—a very deep pleasure and wonder, mingled with a sense of fear. Without the element of fear, there is no sense of the sublime. Many persons would prefer to use the word "awe"—not fear. But awe is fear—though this word is commonly applied to particular qualities or kinds of fear, such as religious fear or the fear of some tremendous power, like the power of the king. I prefer to use a word to which no special meanings are attached. Therefore I say fear. When you behold, whether in your mind only, or with your eyes, something so wonderful and so great and so beautiful that it makes you afraid to look at it and to think about it—that is an experience of the sublime. The sight of the sea in a great storm, or the sight of a tremendous range of mountains covered with eternal snow, may be called a sublime aspect. But how much more sublime is the sight of the sky at night, when there are no clouds, and all the stars appear sparklingly before you. A thousand years ago the night sky probably did not look so sublime to the eyes of man as it does to-day, because man then knew very little about the science of astronomy. But now through the acquisition of that science, we know that in looking at the starry sky we are looking into the infinite, and we know that each of those distant myriads of tiny points of light is really a far-off sun, probably surrounded by many worlds, more or less like our own. Then the thought of our relation to the monstrous and endless universe fills us with that profound emotion which is called sublime. Indeed the sight of the night sky required a special word or

term to describe; and the emotion that it gives us has been qualified by a particular psychological name. It is called Cosmic Emotion.

But even before men knew so much about the universe as every student in a middle school knows to-day, people wrote poems full of sublime feeling about the sky. I need not quote Biblical texts for various reasons—which I shall afterwards explain; I shall confine myself to modern poems. In all English literature I think that there is no poem about night much finer as to thought and feeling than a poem with a Latin title written by William Habington in the first half of the seventeenth century—or to be more exact, between the years 1605 and 1654:

NOX NOCTI INDICAT SCIENTIAM
(Night unto night showeth knowledge)

When I survey the bright
Celestial sphere;
So rich with jewels hung, that Night
Doth like an Ethiop bride appear:

My soul her wings doth spread
And heavenward flies,
Th' Almighty's mysteries to read
In the large volumes of the skies.

For the bright firmament
Shoots forth no flame
So silent, but is eloquent
In speaking the Creator's name.

No unregarded star
Contracts its light
Into so small a character,
Removed far from our human sight,

But if we steadfast look
We shall discern
In it, as in some holy book,
How man may heavenly knowledge learn.

It tells the conqueror
That far-stretch'd power,
Which his proud dangers traffic for,
Is but the triumph of an hour:

That from the farthest North,
Some nation may,
Yet undiscover'd, issue forth,
And o'er his new-got conquest sway:

Some nation yet shut in
With hills of ice
May be let out to scourge his sin,
Till they shall equal him in vice.

And then they likewise shall
Their ruin have;
For as yourselves your empires fall,
And every kingdom hath a grave.

Thus those celestial fires,
Though seeming mute,
The fallacy of our desires
And all the pride of life confute:—

For they have watch'd since first
The World had birth:
And found sin in itself accurst,
And nothing permanent on Earth.

The most beautiful part of this fine poem consists in the last lines of the first stanza,—comparing the night, all sparkling with stars, to a beautiful black woman robed for her bridal. "Ethiop," spelt differently from the manner in which we would spell the word to-day (Ethiope), is a short form of the word Ethiopian, belonging to the country of Ethiopia. The Romans called that part of Africa, which we to-day call Abyssinia, by the name of Ethiopia, and the word Ethiopia gradually became in poetry a general name for Africa. So the phrase "Ethiop bride" means simply an African bride, so far as the literal meaning goes. But there is another than the literal meaning; indeed, to appreciate

the comparison you should know something of the old-fashioned idea of Africa, the artistic idea of an Ethiopian bride as painted by the old-fashioned painters. In many old paintings and drawings the Queen of Sheba, visiting Solomon, was represented as a beautiful black woman; and some traditions so spoke of her. The Quaker poet Whittier, in our own time, re-echoes this legend in his poem about King Solomon and the ants. There he speaks of her as—

> Comely, but black withal,
> To whom, perchance, belongs
> That wondrous Song of songs.

There is at least some justification for the use of the word Ethiopian in describing dark beauty. In certain parts of what used to be called Ethiopia there are some fine black races, whose women have a well deserved reputation for beauty. And among many dark races it is the custom to wear much jewelry,—gold and silver. The Indian women to-day save their money, not by putting it in a bank, but by turning it into ankle-rings, armlets, nose-rings, ear-rings, and other ornaments of gold and silver. The sight of a black woman thus decorated with glittering metal is certainly very picturesque, and might well suggest to a poet such a comparison as that of the poem which we have read.

I need not say much to you about the general thought of the composition, which needs little explanation. The sight of the night sky has given to the observer the sense of the impermanency of all earthly things. Those stars that he sees have been shining thus from before the beginning of the world; they have looked down upon all the changes that have taken place in the history of races and of empires. They remind us how fleeting are all things that we know. But then, being a religious poet, he attempts to explain the decay of kingdoms and of empires as the result of human folly and sin; and he remembers old Biblical prophecies about the future coming of a mighty race from the North, to punish and destroy luxurious nations. This northern

people, he thinks, will prevail, until they become morally corrupt themselves; and thereafter they too must be swept away. That is what the sky of the night taught the old-fashioned poet. It is interesting, in this connection, to remember the recent prediction of Spencer to the effect that the present European civilization,—the industrial civilization of the West,—will probably be destroyed by some ruder and more vigorous, but less civilized race.

Solemn prophecies are not inspired often in these days by the vision of the night sky. Most modern poets have become too wise to attempt prophecy; perhaps I may say too sceptical. But the sight of the sky must always continue to inspire deep emotion and awe; and we find that such feelings increase, rather than diminish, with wisdom. Here is a powerful and very recent poem, entitled "The Night Sky," by Charles G. D. Roberts:

O Deep of Heaven, 't is thou alone art boundless,
'T is thou alone our balance shall not weigh,
'T is thou alone our fathom-line finds soundless,—
Whose infinite our finite must obey!
Through thy blue realms and down thy starry reaches
Thought voyages forth beyond thy furthest fire,
And homing from no sighted shoreline, teaches
Thee measureless as is the soul's desire.
O Deep of Heaven! no beam of Pleiad ranging
Eternity may bridge thy gulf of spheres!
The ceaseless hum that fills thy sleep unchanging
Is rain of the innumerable years.
Our worlds, our suns, our ages,—these but stream
Through thine abiding like a dateless dream.

The author of the above poem is a professor of English literature in a Canadian university; and he has certainly made a fine effort. Here we have something a little in advance of the older religious poem which I quoted to you, —not in workmanship, but rather in thought—or, to put it still more exactly, in the quality of the emotion that the thought creates. The idea is simple, if you like; but the

simplicity is of that infinite kind which swallows up all details. The comparison of the infinite night, in which the sparkling of suns is no more than a glimmer of phosphorescence, to an ocean without bottom and without shore, is perhaps simple; but it is the very largest comparison which the human mind is capable of making. Notice that the use of sea terms in these lines—such as "soundless (unfathomable)," "shoreline," etc., is not only tremendously effective, but even awful. Awful only because our modern minds have been enlarged by astronomic knowledge. Truly the night, as we see it now, represents the real Sea of Birth and Death, in which universes appear and disappear like those strange lights that we see among the waves in summer nights. And the sound of this sea, the poet likens to the sound of the fleeting of millions of centuries. Time itself, and Name, and Form, and all that we take for reality, is nothing at all but the shadow of passing waves in that eternal night or sea of space surrounding our tiny world.

But the poet stops at this thought. It is only, again, the thought of impermanency, expressed in a larger, because more modern, way than in the first poem. It is grand, it is awful; but it is not consoling, nor pleasing—except as regards the pleasure of fear. There is a cosmic emotion still larger than this, which may be awakened by the sight of the night sky; and there is an English poet who expresses it. The consoling way to consider the awfulness of the universe is to remember, when thinking about it, that we ourselves are a part of it, that the same life which is in us thrills also in the furthest visible stars, to remember that, as parts of one immeasurable whole, we must not be afraid of that vastness. It is George Meredith who best teaches us this lesson in verse, in his poem entitled "Meditation Under Stars." He begins by asking the right question—What is our relation to the stars?

> What links are ours with orbs that are
> So resolutely far:
> The solitary asks, and they

Give radiance as from a shield:
Still at the death of day,
The seen, the unrevealed.

What relation have we with those orbs which remain so unmercifully, so frightfully far away from us? That is the question which every lonely thinker asks himself; but the stars do not answer it readily. They send their light to us, cold and bright, like the glittering of a shield—the shield of mystery, harder to pierce than adamant. Always, of clear evenings, after the sinking of the sun, we see them shining; but always the mystery of them remains exactly the same as before.

Implacable they shine
To us who would of Life obtain
An answer for the life we strain,
To nourish with one sign.
Nor can imagination throw
The penetrative shaft: we pass
The breath of thought, who would divine
If haply they may grow
As Earth; have our desire to know;
If life comes there to grain from grass,
And flowers like ours of toil and pain;
Has passion to beat bar,
Win space from cleaving brain;
The mystic link attain,
Whereby star holds on star.

Without pity those stars seem to shine,—without pity for us who exhaust our strength and our knowledge in the desperate effort to obtain one little hint of the meaning of the mystery of life. They tell us nothing. Even our imagination cannot really help us to know the meaning of that life of stars. When we try merely to reason about the universe, we only waste our intellectual power—because the riddle is beyond the range of human thought. And yet we want to know whether those far-away suns may not some day become worlds like this world,—and whether there will be races in

those other worlds anxious to know what we are anxious to know,—and whether life upon those worlds passes, or will pass, through the same evolution as it has passed in our world, and through the same forms of struggle and pain. We want to know also whether, in those other worlds that are, or that may become, passion must be controlled as it is here our duty to control it. Will the people of other worlds be obliged to obtain wisdom by conquering themselves; or will they be able to learn the tremendous secret of communicating between world and world? Will they be able to discover the secret relation between star and star?

It is no use, he tells us, merely to reason about these things. The stars will not answer human questions. We can understand our relation to the universe only by trust, by faith, by love:

> To deeper than this ball of sight
> Appeal the lustrous people of the night.
> Fronting yon shoreless, sown with fiery sails,
> It is our ravenous that quails,
> Flesh by its craven thirsts and fears distraught.
> The spirit leaps alight,
> Doubts not in them is he.

By "ball of sight" the poet means the human eye. He says that the stars, the bright people of the night, as he calls them, appeal to something deeper within us than our bodily eyes. Why are we afraid when we look at the shoreless infinite of the night sky? Why do we tremble in thought at the immensity of that ocean, with its sails of fire (constellations)? Merely because of our poor weak bodies. The sight of the universe frightens our bodies, reminding them how weak and how ephemeral they are. The cowardly desires of our bodies for enjoyment, and the cowardly fear which our bodies have of death—that only makes us afraid. Our flesh is afraid, because it is perishable. Our fear of the infinite is a mere animal fear—therefore unworthy. But the spirit that is within us is not perishable; and a man whose

spirit is enlightened is not afraid of the infinite; he is not afraid of the stars. When he looks up at the stars he feels sure that he belongs to them quite as much as he belongs to this world—he knows that his real soul is thrilling at once within his earthly body and also in the light of the most distant stars. This is another way of saying that the spirit of man itself is really infinite, being a part of the infinite life.

> So may we read, and little find them cold:
> Not frosty lamps illumining dead space,
> Not distant aliens, not senseless Powers.
> The fire is in them whereof we are born;
> The music of their motion may be ours.
> Spirit shall deem them beckoning Earth and voiced
> Sisterly to her, in her beams rejoiced.

That is to say: if we think of the universe as a part of ourselves and of ourselves as a part of the universe and the universal life,—then the stars will not seem to us either awful or cold. No more will we think of them as of far-away strangers; nor will we think of them as merely representing masses of force or centres of gravitation. We shall remember that their light represents the very same light that is in ourselves. The poet says that we have been born of fire. I need scarcely tell you that this is scientifically quite true. All the life existing upon this earth, as well as the earth itself, originally came from the sun. The poet is only reminding us that all worlds are born in fire. And you know that they will all die in fire. But the principle of deepest life, that is older than any sun and will continue after millions of suns have passed away—the one eternal life is unchangeable; the stars and the universes are only passing manifestations of it. And that unchangeable and eternal life is also ours. When we look at the far-away stars, they should remind us of the fact that we are eternal, and that the light of them represents only a symbol of the universal life which is at once in us and in millions of suns. When we think in this way, observes the poet, how much more

beautiful does the universe appear!

Half strange seems Earth, and sweeter than her flowers.

And Meredith partly repeats the thought of Shelley, suggesting that the spirit of the universe is love. I believe that this is the deepest modern poem on the subject of night. It has one literary defect; it is so obscure in passages that I cannot attempt to quote the whole of it. Browning often has the same defect in the midst of otherwise beautiful work.

Further than this, cosmic emotion cannot go in poetry. But after all, the subject is rather a heavy one for the class room; and I prefer to turn now to night poetry of a somewhat lighter kind. I may begin this departure by some quotations from Wordsworth. He has two pieces of poetry about night which may, and ought to, please you. The first is merely descriptive, but it is description in which Wordsworth has never been surpassed. It is called "A Night-piece." I shall not quote the whole, only the finest lines. The poet is representing a traveller walking along at night under a cloudy sky. The night is what we would call in Japan *oborodzukiyo*. But all at once the clouds are scattered; and the traveller stops to look up with delight at the sudden spectacle of the moon and stars:

He looks up—the clouds are split
Asunder,—and above his head he sees
The clear Moon, and the glory of the heavens.
There, in a black-blue vault she sails along,
Followed by multitudes of stars, that, small
And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss
Drive as she drives: how fast they wheel away,
Yet vanish not!—the wind is in the tree,
But they are silent;—still they roll along
Immeasurably distant; and the vault,
Built round by those white clouds, enormous clouds,
Still deepens its unfathomable depth.
At length the Vision closes; and the mind,
Not undisturbed by the delight it feels,

Which slowly settles into peaceful calm,
Is left to muse upon the solemn scene.

It is said that Tennyson was partly inspired by this poem when he wrote his famous "Passing of Arthur." You should understand what the poet here means to describe before you can properly appreciate the poem. The whole sky was at first covered with white clouds; but later on an open space appeared in the middle of the sky, just above the traveller's head. What is the effect of looking at a circular space of clear sky surrounded by white clouds? The optical effect is to make the vision of sky appear deeper than it does at any other time, very much deeper than if there were no clouds at all. Also the space of clear sky, thus ringed round with white clouds, looks blacker than it does at any other time, very much blacker than if there were no clouds; and stars and moon would consequently seem to glitter much more brightly than usual. So what Wordsworth is here describing for us is not the usual but the unusual; and he produces the glittering effect as well as the dark effect by the use of the very simplest words. And how admirably does he do it! Notice the adjectives used for the stars,—"small, and sharp, and bright;" what could be simpler, yet what could give the effect better to the imagination? "Sharp" is exactly a proper word; for even under the ordinary telescope the stars always remain only as points of light to the human eye. I need not explain any more, except to remind you that the word "drive" is used here in the sense of drifting, or blown,—as a ship before the wind. Then you will ask, "Is not this wrong?" How can the stars appear to drift in such a way? Only because of the motion of the clouds. The stars themselves are not moving—at least not moving in such a way that a human eye could perceive their movement. But the drifting of the clouds before the wind actually makes the moon and stars appear to have a motion which they actually have not.

The poem is essentially descriptive. But Wordsworth scarcely ever confines himself to pure description; he is a

meditative poet, and even here we have a little bit of reflection. The closing lines give us the emotional effect which the sight of a glorious night makes upon the poet's mind. These are really the most important lines of the composition. If you think a little about them, you will feel how true they are. The sight of a very beautiful night sky, when the winds are still, makes within us a particular feeling of pleasure impossible to describe better by any other term than "peaceful calm." A beautiful spring day, you all know, fills us with delight,—gives us a sense of gladness which we cannot feel under a gloomy sky. If you ask some great physiologist to tell you the reason of the joy that we feel on a beautiful day, he will very probably reply: "It has been shown very clearly that the effect of sunshine is to stimulate circulation." That is to say, the sunlight makes our hearts beat more quickly. But a great psychologist would tell you that this can only be a partial explanation; that the experience of the race has also something to do with our pleasure on bright days; that we inherit something of the joy of past humanity in the sight of blue sky and pure air. At all events, here is the fact that the sight of a beautiful night sky certainly produces in our minds a great pleasure and peace; and this could not be explained by the effect of star light or moon light upon circulation!

The mere pleasure of such vision is seldom unaccompanied by reflection. A beautiful moon, a beautiful starry sky, suggest many thoughts and fancies,—sometimes philosophic, sometimes merely esthetic, sometimes melancholy. One of the most common thoughts in moon poetry is that of the moral simile afforded by the sight of clouds passing over the moon. I need not remind you how often this thought has been expressed by Japanese poets,--and not in one form only, but in many. Perhaps you will be surprised to hear that our Western poets chiefly regard this appearance, in their poems, as a simile of hope, rather than of impermanency or sadness. Here is an example from Coleridge;—and I shall presently offer you other examples. The poem is a

sonnet, and is entitled "To the Autumnal Moon."

Mild Splendour of the various-vested Night!
Mother of wildly-working visions! hail!
I watch thy gliding, while with watery light
Thy weak eye glimmers through a fleecy veil;
And when thou lovest thy pale orb to shroud
Behind the gathered blackness lost on high;
And when thou dartest from the wind-rent cloud
Thy placid lightning o'er the awakened sky.
Ah! such is Hope! as changeful and as fair!
Now dimly peering on the wistful sight;
Now hid behind the dragon-winged Despair;
But soon emerging in her radiant might
She o'er the sorrow-clouded breast of Care
Sails, like a meteor kindling in its flight.

First let us notice a few of the peculiar expressions in the poem. You must remember that night is personified; and that the term "various-vested," signifying "clad or dressed in many different kinds of dresses," has a double value—referring both to the personification, and to the natural fact that night appears to us in a great many different aspects. By the expression "wildly-working vision" you may simply understand "dream." Night has often been termed poetically the mother of dreams; and the extraordinary and impossible element in our dreams is properly qualified in the poet's use of the adverb "wildly." In the fourth line please notice the word "fleecy;" it is very commonly used by Western poets in speaking of light, white clouds, because their curly and imponderable appearance suggests that of a fleece of wool. Eastern poets have not been, in old times at least, sufficiently familiar with the appearance of sheep's wool to make use of a like comparison. But I believe that they have often used an equally good simile, that of cotton or silk. In the last line of the poem, please observe that the natural fact is very exactly described. The meteor or shooting star is described as "kindling *in* its flight"—and you must understand the preposition "in"

to have the value of "during." As a fact, small meteors are said to become incandescent at the moment of entering our atmosphere; they appear to take fire as they fly.

Before we take another fine example of the same sort from Wordsworth, I may as well offer you an example of pure description of night scenery—description without any meditation whatever, without any reflection or sentiment. Such poetry may have occasional value. Whether it has value or not will chiefly depend upon the quality of suggestiveness that may be in it. If poetry can make us think and feel, without itself actually expressing any definite thought or feeling, it is true poetry; and it may be even great poetry. This poem has no title.

The clouds have left the sky,
The wind hath left the sea,
The half-moon up on high
Shrinketh her face of dree.

She lightens on the comb
Of leaden waves, that roar
And thrust their hurried foam
Up on the dusky shore.

Behind the western bars
The shrouded day retreats,
And unperceived the stars
Steal to their sovran seats.

And whiter grows the foam,
The small moon lightens more;
And as I turn me home,
My shadow walks before.

This poem, which is by Robert Bridges, forms one of those vivid appeals to memory which only a master poet can make. In the first stanza there is nothing particular to notice except the use of the old obsolete word "dree," signifying sadness or sorrow. It is a still night, with a young moon in the sky; and a heavy surf is rolling in, slowly. Notice the

use of the word "comb" in the second stanza. You must have observed, at certain times, the resemblance of the lines on the sides of the moving wave to the lines in combed hair. Sailors often speak of waves as "combing," when the foam on the top of the crests is so even, and the lines of the curve below so regular, as to make one think of wool being passed through a comb. A more artistic though very simple word in the same stanza is "leaden," used to convey the grey metallic aspect of waves under moonlight. Though the waves themselves move slowly, the foam is not slow; it runs up the beach very fast after the fall of the wave; and this the poet suggests excellently by the use of two words, "thrust" and "hurried." Watch slow waves breaking, and you will see how true these words are of bursting foam. It moves as if it had been given a sudden thrust or push after falling, and then runs as if in a great hurry. There is nothing more to notice or explain; the rest of the poem speaks for itself. But of course the full impression comes only with the last line, describing the shadow of the man walking home in front of him. After you have read that, the memory of many a night at sea must return to you. That is, if you have often been at the seashore, you can get the whole sensation of the night in the little picture; the appearance of the new moon, and the first sparkling of the stars, the colour and the form, as well as the sounds of the great waves —lastly, the cool sensation of the homeward walk, and that sense of loneliness which impels a man to find interest even in the movements of his own shadow.

But poetry like this, good as it is, depends very much for its effect upon the experience of the reader. That is true of all suggestive poetry. If you have not had the experience, then you cannot feel the poem. And the experience of the seacoast at night is not altogether what we might call a common experience. Thousands of us do not go to the sea. In America, for example, there are probably several millions of people who never have seen and probably never will see the sea. But there is nobody, with eyes, who has

not seen the moon, and who cannot feel the poetry of a Wordsworth or a Coleridge writing about the moon. Here is an example of the use by Wordsworth of the very same thought that inspired Coleridge, with some original variations:

Lo! where the Moon along the sky
Sails with her happy destiny;
Oft is she hid from mortal eye
Or dimly seen,
But when the clouds asunder fly
How bright her mien!

Far different we—a froward race,
Thousands though rich in Fortune's grace
With cherished sullenness of pace
Their way pursue,
Ingrates who wear a smileless face
The whole year through.

If kindred humours e'er would make
My spirit droop for drooping's sake,
From Fancy following in thy wake,
Bright ship of heaven!
A counter impulse let me take
And be forgiven.

Paraphrased this signifies: See the happy moon moving through the sky—how beautiful she is! It often happens that clouds hide her from us, or half conceal her. But those clouds break at last; and then how glorious the moon shines!

Human beings ought to imitate the moon in one regard. We ought to show happy faces whenever our troubles have passed, just as the moon looks always bright when the vapours have passed her. But many people, even though rich and fortunate in their circumstances, refuse to be pleasant and contented. They are never grateful, never glad.

(The last stanza is addressed directly to the moon.) If I were one of those who could become needlessly sad—melancholy without reason—then I should pray to you, O beau-

tiful moon, bright ship of heaven, to teach me better. My imagination as I watch you waxing and waning, becoming clouded and yet always becoming bright again, reminds me that we should always hope.

I do not want to give you a great number of poems of the same kind at the same time, for fear that you might lose interest in the subject. Let me therefore vary examples by giving you one illustration of love poetry in relation to the moon. The most beautiful love poem of this kind that I happen to know of, in English at least, is by an American —James Russell Lowell, one of the very few American poets who have made a name in English literature. He was at one time minister to England. His idea in this poem appears to me, if not exactly new, to be at least expressed in quite a novel way. The principal fancy is suggested by the scientific fact of the action of the moon upon the tides of the sea. Now, if you substitute the soul for the sea, its passions and emotions for the tides, and love for the moon, you can perceive at once what a fine opportunity is offered to poetry by the suggestion. I think that Lowell has used it very beautifully. This poem is entitled "The Moon."

My soul was like the sea,
Before the moon was made,
Moaning in vague immensity,
Of its own strength afraid,
Unrestful and unstaid.
Through every rift it foamed in vain,
About its earthly prison,
Seeking some unknown thing in pain,
And sinking restless back again,
For yet no moon had risen:
Its only voice a vast dumb moan,
Of utterless anguish speaking,
It lay unhopefully alone,
And lived but in an aimless seeking.

So was my soul; but when 'twas full

Of unrest to o'erloading,
A voice of something beautiful
Whispered a dim foreboding,
And yet so soft, so sweet, so low,
It had not more of joy than woe;
And, as the sea doth oft lie still,
Making its waters meet,
As if by an unconscious will,
For the moon's silver feet,
So lay my soul within mine eyes
When thou, its guardian moon, didst rise.

And now, howe'er its waves above
May toss and seem uneaseful,
One strong, eternal law of Love,
With guidance sure and peaceful,
As calm and natural as breath,
Moves its great deeps through life and death.

This almost takes us back in spirit to the Elizabethan age. But I need not remind you that the scientific fancy is only playfully used. We may be quite certain that the sea is not older than the moon, and that the sea did not exist at any time before the moon. What the poet really wishes to suggest is the condition of affairs upon a planet, having an atmosphere but no moon. That is a question which has lately interested many astronomers, and especially the son of the great Charles Darwin, who has published a work upon the relation of tidal action to the revolution of planetary bodies. There would be tides upon the face of this earth, even if there were no moon; for there are what we call solar tides. But these are very slight movements compared with those which the moon causes. A man living without love might well compare himself to a sea without any moon to direct its tides, but I need scarcely tell you that this fancy cannot be exhausted by any one poem. It can be used in a thousand ways, and I recommend any of my hearers who compose poetry to think about it.

Shelley has written a number of poems about the moon,

but nearly all were unfinished at the time of his death. They exist only as fragments, and none of them are worth quoting to you. But let me remind you that he made a beautiful translation of the ancient hymn of Homer to the moon; and if any of you should ever write an essay about moon poetry, I hope you will not forget this beautiful translation. I cannot quote it in this class, unfortunately, because of the very great number of mythological allusions, which would require too much time to explain. But Shelley has written perhaps the most beautiful English poem in existence on the more general subject of night, and I can quote freely from that. The poem on night is written after the Greek fashion, night being personified as a beautiful dark-haired woman. Also this poem shows some traces of the old Greek poet Menander. Menander was a delightful poet; we have lost a great number of his compositions, but enough remains to make us regret for ever that anything written by such a poet should perish. He was very fond of solitude and study; and he wrote a beautiful invocation to night which is famous,—somewhat to this effect:

O holy Night, come thou hither and comfort me. To me thou art all perfume, all sweetness, all peace!

This is the devotion of the happy old Greek scholar to solitude and calm and the silence required for thought. I imagine that Shelley must have been inspired by Menander; but that does not affect the original worth of his poem, which is wonderfully beautiful.

TO NIGHT

Swiftly walk o'er the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where, all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
Wouldst thou me?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noontide bee,
Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?—And I replied,
No, not thee!

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, belovèd Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon!

The poet is praying to the night to give him inspiration and calm,—not sleep. But before we go any further,—and before I can explain the poem at all, I must talk to you about the Greek mythology in it. Otherwise you cannot perfectly understand it.

In Greek mythology Night was a virgin goddess, daughter of Chaos. She gave birth, virgin-birth, to many children having no father; and among these children were Death, Sleep, and Dream. Also she was said to live in a cave at

the end of the world. Day lived in the same cave. When Night came out of the cave, Day went in. This is the most ancient story about her. But Greek mythology is an exceedingly difficult subject, because it changes at almost every period of Greek literature. And you will not be surprised therefore when I tell you that different Greek poets, at different times, gave very different and very contradictory accounts of Night. Some poets called her the sister, not the mother, of Death; some said her cave was in the North; most of them said that it was in the West; but a Roman poet spoke of it as being in the East,—and Shelley follows him in this poem. All that is essential to remember is the association of Night with Death, Sleep, and Dream,—and the fact of her being a virgin goddess.

Now you will understand better what Shelley means by speaking of the "misty eastern cave" and about "Night weaving dreams." Also you will better understand the description of her as bending down to cover the face of Day with her long black hair, and kissing her as one woman might caress another. And Shelley speaks of Day in the second stanza as feminine—he is not referring to Helios, the later sun god, but to Eos, or Aurora, the goddess of dawn. In the same stanza the word "opiate" used as an adjective signifies "sleep giving." After this you can easily comprehend the reference to Death and Sleep in the succeeding stanza. Each asks the weary poet, "Shall not I be able to comfort you as well as Night?" But the poet wishes for neither the rest of Death nor the rest of Sleep. To Sleep he makes answer, "No, I do not wish for Death. He will come sooner or later, when you cannot come. And I do not wish to sleep; Sleep will come to me even when you have no more power to comfort me." It is the peace and inspiration of Night that he wants, in order to compose his verses.

As I told you, the influence of Menander appears in this poem,—especially in the use of the phrase "beloved Night." But it appears much more in a famous poem to night written

by Longfellow. Longfellow has composed five remarkable poems on the subject of night and moonlight; he was especially a poet of moonlight. Although the composition to which I have just referred is an early one, nevertheless it is beautiful enough and brief enough to quote in this place—at least the best of it:

I heard the trailing garments of the Night
Sweep through her marble halls.
I saw her sable skirts all fringed with light
From the celestial walls!

I felt her presence, by its spell of might,
Stoop o'er me from above;
The calm, majestic presence of the Night,
As of the one I love.

. . . .

O holy Night! from thee I learn to bear
What man has borne before!
Thou layest thy finger on the lips of Care,
And they complain no more.

Peace! Peace! Orestes-like I breathe this prayer!
Descend with broad-winged flight,
The welcome, the thrice-prayed-for, the most fair,
The best-beloved Night!

The beautiful parts of this poem are almost literally translated from the Greek. It was Menander especially who addressed the night with the words, "O holy Night!" The reference to Orestes in the last stanza belongs to the Greek tragedy of Orestes,—it was dramatically treated both by Sophocles and Æschylus. The story of Orestes is the terrible story of a man who, having killed his own mother because she had killed his father, is nevertheless punished by the gods for his offence against filial piety. The story afforded a great moral problem to the ancient dramatists. Filial piety was the indispensable virtue in Greek life; but Orestes was placed in the strange position of a man who had to confront two contradictory aspects of the moral law.

As a son, he was bound to avenge his father; yet, as the enemy of his father was his own mother, he could not avenge his father without offending against the law—against the very law which it was his duty to obey. And the gods punished him by sending the Furies to torment him. At last they forgave him—because his case was such a very exceptional one. He had to bear only half the punishment. During the time when the Furies tormented him, he used to pray to Night and Sleep and Death to save him—to give him a moment's rest, or to destroy him utterly. This is the prayer that Longfellow speaks of; and the beautiful phrases in the last stanza are literally taken from the Greek.

The same poet has given us a much later poem on the subject of night as the giver of peace and forgetfulness. This is much more serious, but an equally beautiful composition; and one of the comparisons in it deserves particular notice for its curious beauty.

NIGHT

Into the darkness and the hush of night
  Slowly the landscape sinks, and fades away,
  And with it fade the phantoms of the day,
  The ghosts of men and things, that haunt the light.
The crowd, the clamour, the pursuit, the flight,
  The unprofitable splendour and display,
  The agitations, and the cares that prey
  Upon our hearts, all vanish out of sight.
The better life begins; the world no more
  Molests us; all its records we erase
  From the dull commonplace-book of our lives
That like a palimpsest is written o'er
  With trivial incidents of time and place,
  And lo! the ideal, hidden beneath, revives.

There are two things especially to notice in this poem, before we speak of the general meaning. The first is the somewhat unfamiliar description of the landscape "sinking into darkness." Much more commonly do we find poets describing the darkness as coming down upon the landscape;

scarcely ever do we find an English poet speaking of the landscape as descending into the darkness. Yet this unusual comparison is quite correct,—even more correct than the other. But you should be somewhere among mountains to understand how true it is. If you happened to be in a valley about sunset time with great peaks rising all about you, you would see that the darkness of the night does not "come down" at all. Quite the contrary. First the bottom of the valley becomes dark; then the blackness covers the smaller hill. The tops of the trees still catch the light; but the lower part of the trees cannot be distinctly seen. Gradually the tops of the trees also disappear; and the darkness covers all except the very highest mountain peaks. One peak after another becomes black; then at last the very highest mountain top is also swallowed up by the flood of darkness. So that it is from the ground upwards that the night appears to grow. The effect, to the eye, is like that of a black flood rising up, or of the land itself sinking down into the dark. What poets have written about night descending from the sky is simply all wrong, and not at all true to observation. If you are ever among mountains at sunset time, please observe the effect, and see whether I have not correctly described it.

The other matter to which I want to call your attention is the beautiful comparison about the palimpsest. Perhaps some of you may not know what a palimpsest is; and unless you know, you cannot see the beauty of this poem. A palimpsest is the name given to an ancient Greek or Roman manuscript, written upon parchment, from which the original writing was scraped off in order that the same parchment could be used again for the writing of another manuscript. Mediæval Christianity had no liking for the old Greek or Roman literature. The monks thought that all pagan literature was wicked, and when they happened to find a beautiful Greek or Roman manuscript they would scrape off all the writing, and use the parchment to copy some religious text upon it. But, by doing this, they preserved for us many

things that would otherwise have been lost, for modern science discovered a way of removing the modern writing from the palimpsest and restoring the old Roman or Greek texts. And in this way we have been able to recover a considerable number of Greek poems and Latin texts. Remember only that these twice written parchments are called palimpsests. The poet tells us in this poem that the real life of the mind is not of the day, but of the night. When we can, we should think only about good and beautiful and happy things. But during the daytime we have very little leisure to do as we like, and can only do what we must. We have to earn a living; we have to perform many duties that are painful or disagreeable; we have to think about eating and drinking and paying money and arranging for the necessities of existence. It is only when the night comes that we are quite free to think about what is beautiful and what is good. And when this peaceful and happy darkness comes, then our minds suddenly become freed from all the memories and trifling details of the life of effort—just as the leaves of a palimpsest become freed from the mediæval writing which concealed the beautiful Greek or Latin thought. Then the true intellectual beauty can show itself, the ideal in the soul of man.

I shall not quote all of Longfellow's poems about night; it would require too much time. But I may quote to you a beautiful piece about moonlight. Longfellow has two pieces of great beauty about moonlight. One is called "The Harvest Moon;" but it is not, I think, the better. I much prefer the simpler piece entitled "Moonlight" because of the thought that is in it:

As a pale phantom with a lamp
  Ascends some ruin's haunted stair,
So glides the moon along the damp
  Mysterious chambers of the air.

Now hidden in cloud, and now revealed,
  As if this phantom, full of pain,
Were by the crumbling walls concealed,
  And at the windows seen again.

Until at last, serene and proud,
  In all the splendour of her light,
She walks the terraces of cloud,
  Supreme as Empress of the Night.

The allusion to the ghost with a lamp at once suggests to an English reader many traditions of his native country. But it is necessary to tell you that almost every ancient castle in England has its ghost story and its particular ghost. Usually the ghost is the figure of a woman in white, who is seen to climb up the broken stairways of some ruined tower at night. She walks where there are no more steps, and sometimes she can be seen looking out of the window of the room which has no floor. This is the comparison intended by Longfellow. But the latter part of the poem is the beautiful part—

I look, but recognize no more
  Objects familiar to my view;
The very pathway to my door
  Is an enchanted avenue.

All things are changed. One mass of shade,
  The elm-trees drop their curtains down;
By palace, park, and colonnade
  I walk as in a foreign town.

The very ground beneath my feet
  Is clothed with a diviner air;
White marble paves the silent street
  And glimmers in the empty square.

Moonlight changes and makes beautiful even common and ugly things. Japanese poets speak of snow as making a silver robe; Western poets speak of moonlight only as doing this. Western poets do not find snow very beautiful; snowy landscapes are usually spoken of in relation to death and silence only; snow is often called the death-shroud of the world, or the funeral robe of the earth. The reason is that in Western countries the winter is not really beautiful; and the reason why it is not beautiful is that there are very few evergreen trees. But in Japan evergreen trees form a great

part of the landscape scenery; evergreen trees look very beautiful when the snow lies upon them—whereas most of our Western trees are deciduous, and become, as our poets say, "skeleton trees" in winter. So we do not find beauty in snow. But all that the Japanese poets find beautiful in snowy landscapes, Western poets find in moonlight landscapes. You remember Tennyson's delightful lines:

> Silver sails all out of the west
> Under the silver moon.*

So we speak of the moon making a silver sea, silver rivers, silver waves. We speak of her as flooding the world with silver light. We speak of her as a great witch, who transforms all things by touching them. So the poet here tells us how at night even the street reaching to his house becomes enchanted under the light of the moon. The common clay is turned to silver dust; the common pavement is changed into white marble. The familiar town is so beautiful and so different under that magic light that it looks like a foreign town, and even the air appears to have become in some way divine. Now listen to the moral of the poem:

> Illusion! Underneath there lies
> The common life of every day;
> Only the spirit glorifies
> With its own tints the sober gray.
>
> In vain we look, in vain uplift
> Our eyes to heaven, if we are blind;
> We see but what we have the gift
> Of seeing; what we bring we find.

This is as true as it is fine. The beautiful moonlight does not really change anything; it only seems to change the world; it is an illusion. The truth is that the beauty of this silver scenery exists only in our minds. But that is true of everything in our lives. Whoever wishes to see beauty will always be able to find it if he has a beautiful soul, a beautiful mind. He who has not a beautiful mind, will

* *Princess*, iii, 14-5

never be able to enjoy the world. A person without imagination is very much like a man without eyes; he cannot see the charming illusions which nature everywhere prepares for him.

You have all heard of Professor Gosse, a great authority on English literature, a charming writer of prose, and in his leisure hours a poet. Most of his poems are very scholarly—mere studies in different forms of verse; I am not sure that they could interest you. But he has translated from the Swedish a very pretty composition about the moon, expressing the same thought uttered by Coleridge and Wordsworth, in a somewhat different way. The poem is entitled "Luna"—which you know to be the Latin name of the moon. It is a sonnet.

Deep slumber hung o'er sea and hill and plain;
  With pale pink cheek fresh from her watery caves
  Slow rose the moon out of the midnight waves,
Like Venus out of ocean born again;
Then blazed Olympian on the dark blue main;
  "So shall my star," hark how my weak hope raves!
  "My happy star ascend the sea that laves
Its shores with grief, and silence all my pain!"
With that there sighed a wandering midnight breeze,
High up among the topmost tufted trees,
  And o'er the moon's face blew a veil of cloud;
And in the breeze my genius spake and said,
"While thy heart stirs, thy glimmering hope has fled,
  And like the moon lies muffled in a shroud."

The mythological allusions need explanation perhaps. Remember that the Goddess of Love was called in Greek mythology the foam-born, because she was supposed to have been made out of the foam of the sea. In the fourth line of the poem the poet compares the moon, rising from the sea, to Venus born a second time. The adjective "Olympian" used in the Greek sense means god-like; the gods were supposed to dwell upon the mountain Olympus, and they are called therefore the Olympians. In the third line from the end of the poem, please notice the word "genius;" this term is also used in the classic sense, and means a guardian spirit;

it has nothing to do with the modern meaning which we give to the word. Altogether this is a good example of a contemporary classic poem. And I suppose Mr. Gosse translated it only as an example of the classic style. But it is good, and I think that you can easily see the meaning of it. The solitary thinker observing the moon rise brightly out of the bitter sea thinks to himself that it is a happy omen. "Some time in the future," he says, "my life will be illuminated by a success, by a gladdening, as now the sea is illuminated by the moon." But even while he speaks thus to himself, a wind arises and blows a cloud across the moon. Then the guardian spirit of the man mocks him for depending thus upon so uncertain an omen. Even while your heart had only time to beat once, that hope of yours is gone; it is all darkened, like the moon by a cloud.

It has frequently been observed by Japanese poets as well as by Western poets, that the aspects of nature, and the sounds of nature, affect us pleasurably or otherwise very much according to the state of our mind at the time that we see her beauties or hear her voices. The last poem about the moon indicated a melancholy state of mind on the part of the poet; but often poets have been made much more sad by the sight of the moon, or have been impelled to express still more melancholy fancies. The most melancholy of all Western poems on the subject of night and the moon are those of the Italian Leopardi; but they need not concern us here, for English poets can give us numerous examples of melancholy thought on the subject. Christina Rossetti, the very first of English female poets in point of excellence and correct taste, has actually compared the sight of the heavens at night to the sight of a funeral. I quote one stanza from her little poem entitled "Death-Watches:"

The cloven East brings forth the sun,
  The cloven West doth bury him
What time his gorgeous race is run
  And all the world grows dim;
A funeral moon is lit in heaven's hollow,
And pale the star-lights follow.

Of course this is a play of fancy upon the old poetical idea of sunset as representing the death of the day. By this time you must have become familiar with such English poetical idioms as "the dying day," "the dying sun," "sun-death," "the red death of the day-star," "the sanguine West," "the waters dyed with the blood-red of the sinking sun." All these expressions sound strange, I think, to your ears; but they have been common in Europe for many centuries. I think that Miss Rossetti was, however, one of the first to carry out the whole idea of the sun's funeral in this way,—representing the moon as a funeral lamp, and the procession of stars as a long train of mourners carrying lights. Yet there is a much more effective way in poetry of expressing the real romance of the moon. Do you not remember an old Chinese poem about a lover looking at the moon, far away from home, and suddenly thinking to himself that the same moon is now shining upon the home of the person whom he loves, thousands of miles away? This kind of sentiment in poetry is really one of the very finest that mankind has yet been able to express—I mean the consciousness of the relation between the emotion and the nature that inspires it. Really, nature in herself is almost nothing. The thing that we should try to express in poetry is the feeling which nature creates in us. No matter how cleverly you try to describe a landscape, you never can exactly paint it in words. But you can do something much better than that. You can express the thoughts and feelings that you have while looking at it. Now there is a very famous English poem in which the whole effect is made by the very same method as that used by the old Chinese poet of whom I spoke to you a little time ago. When I was a boy everybody used to learn that little poem; and it used to be recited in classes of oratory. I think that some of you may know it; so it will not be necessary to quote the whole of it; for it is rather long. But I want to quote to you so much of it as will illustrate that rule of literary art which I have suggested,—about describing the emotion caused by some natural spectacle rather than trying

to describe the spectacle in itself. The name of the little poem is "Bingen on the Rhine." It was written by an English lady, Mrs. Caroline Elizabeth Norton, and it is one of the few things that keep her memory fresh in the pages of popular anthologies.

For the benefit of any of you who may not happen to know the poem, I want to say something about the Foreign Legion. The French Foreign Legion, as it is called, is one of the most famous and the most curious military bodies in existence. It formerly consisted, I think, of only two legions; but in later years some changes have been made; I believe that the forces are stronger than they were before. The Foreign Legion was not composed of French soldiers, nor was it formed by conscription. All the men who belonged to it were volunteers—men from every nation and almost every country. Men did not join the Foreign Legion in the hope of glory or gain, as a general rule. They entered it, at least many of them, in the hope of throwing their lives away in an honourable fashion. When a man entered the Foreign Legion he changed his name, and he was thereafter probably dead to society. Nobody ever asked who he was or what he used to do. He was only asked to do his duty as a soldier; and the discipline was very severe. Men who had done some great wrong for which society would not forgive them, men who had committed some folly of which they were ashamed, men who had lost their fortunes in gambling,—refugees, desperate men of all kinds, used to enter that legion. It was a kind of fashionable way of committing suicide. And the mixture was a very strange one. Some of the common soldiers had once been great lords; others, perhaps, had only been brigands. A few may have served for pay only,—the pay was high. The Legion was foreign in both senses of the word; it was not used for home duty, but kept chiefly in the colonies, and sent to the ends of the earth on desperate expeditions. When there was something very terrible to do, something that required hundreds to sacrifice their lives, appeal was generally made to

the Foreign Legion.

A soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers,
There was lack of woman's nursing, there was dearth of woman's tears;
But a comrade stood beside him, while his life-blood ebbed away,
And bent, with pitying glances, to hear what he might say.
The dying soldier faltered, and he took that comrade's hand,
And he said, "I nevermore shall see my own, my native land:
Take a message, and a token to some distant friends of mine;
For I was born at Bingen,—at Bingen on the Rhine.

"Tell my brothers and companions, when they meet and crowd around,
To hear my mournful story, in the pleasant vineyard ground,
That we fought the battle bravely, and when the day was done
Full many a corse lay ghastly pale beneath the setting sun;
And mid the dead and the dying were some grown old in wars,—
The death-wound on their gallant breasts, the last of many scars;
And some were young, and suddenly beheld life's morn decline,—
And one had come from Bingen,—fair Bingen on the Rhine.

"Tell my mother that her other son shall comfort her old age;
For I was still a truant bird, that thought his home a cage,
For my father was a soldier, and even as a child
My heart leaped forth to hear him tell of struggles fierce and wild;
And when he died, and left us to divide his scanty hoard,
I let them take whate'er they would,—but kept my father's sword!
And with boyish love I hung it where the bright light used to shine,
On the cottage wall at Bingen,—calm Bingen on the Rhine.

"Tell my sister not to weep for me, and sob with drooping head,
When the troops come marching home again, with glad and gallant tread,
But to look upon them proudly with a calm and steadfast eye,
For her brother was a soldier, too, and not afraid to die;
And if a comrade seek her love, I ask her in my name,
To listen to him kindly, without regret or shame,
And to hang the old sword in its place (my father's sword and mine),
For the honour of old Bingen,—dear Bingen on the Rhine.

"There's another,—not a sister; in the happy days gone by
You'd have known her by the merriment that sparkled in her eye;
Too innocent for coquetry,—too fond for idle scorning,—
O friend! I fear the lightest heart makes sometimes heaviest mourning!

Tell her the last night of my life (for ere the moon be risen
My body will be out of pain, my soul be out of prison),—
I dreamed I stood with *her*, and saw the yellow sunlight shine
On the vine-clad hills of Bingen,—sweet Bingen on the Rhine."

. . . . . .

His trembling voice grew faint and hoarse,—his grasp was childish weak,—
His eyes put on a dying look,—he sighed and ceased to speak;
His comrade bent to lift him, but the spark of life had fled,—
The soldier of the Legion in a foreign land was dead!
And the soft moon rose up slowly, and calmly she looked down
On the red sand of the battle-field, with bloody corses strown;
Yes, calmly on that dreadful scene her pale light seemed to shine,
As it shone on distant Bingen,—fair Bingen on the Rhine.

The reference to the red sand in the last stanza is local, for the fight took place in Algeria, and probably in the southern part, beyond the edge of the desert. There is nothing to explain in the text of the poem, I think, except perhaps the word "coquetry" in one of the stanzas. The word may be used in two senses,—one signifying only pretty and mischievous, the other meaning bad, and that is the meaning in the text. Some handsome girls, having the power to attract the attention and the admiration of men, like to amuse themselves by testing their power upon those who admire them,—trying to see how much influence they have over a man, without caring for him personally in the least. Girls who act this way toward lovers are said to be guilty of coquetry in the bad sense. Perhaps, in the same stanza, the phrase "idle scorning" may be a little obscure,—you had better understand it to mean foolish pride. There is nothing else to explain.

The qualities in this simple but strong poem really belong to a very high class of literature,—that literature which does not belong to any particular time or country, which does not depend upon local effect, and which can be translated into almost any language without losing its pathos or truth or beauty. The incident described, with scarcely a difference of the tale, might as well be of Japanese life as of German

life. If you translate those stanzas, even into Japanese prose, you will see that they do not lose their touching quality or their truth by such translation. But, as I mentioned before, the poem is related to the subject of this lecture only by the last stanza. It is in the closing lines about the moon, —looking down upon the bloody desert and the dead bodies of the soldiers, but looking down at the same time, with the same calm, upon the quiet German town so many hundreds of miles away,—it is in these closing lines, I think, that the great force and beauty of the composition lies. There is almost what we might call "the supreme touch" of emotional art. I think you can see why; but I must try to explain why as definitely as possible. In the previous part of the poem our natural emotions of pity, of love, and of sympathy have been gradually stirred more and more by each succeeding stanza, until the death scene is over. Then, while our feelings are still vibrating in sympathy with the pathos of the story, suddenly comes, like a cold shock, the revelation, the apparition, the surprise of the absolute indifference of nature. The moon sees all this, and much more, and is not in the least changed thereby; the very calmness and purity of her light seems almost cruel under such circumstances. A great modern French poet made a great success by a touch of the very same kind in a poem about Eyes, which I think I read to you long ago. He makes us think about all the millions of beautiful eyes, human eyes, that once looked upon the sun, and that are now dust. "But," he tells us, "the same sun rises every morning just as usual!" It is this same suggestion of nature's indifference that becomes so powerfully pathetic when artistically introduced at the close of the poem we have just read together.

In this case the emotional shock is immediate—it comes as an impulse to present feeling, to the feeling aroused by something mentally seen at the same time. In great drama, great tragical drama, effects of this kind are often given. But in the case of the French poet's composition, the feeling is retrospective,—is aroused by reflection upon the past.

The usual impression which night and its sounds or sights make upon us is apt to be of this kind. More intimate and immediately touching effects, such as those produced in the last stanza of "Bingen on the Rhine," are really uncommon even in poetry, and for that reason ought to be the more prized.

Of the other kind, the retrospective kind, of melancholy feeling, a famous modern example is Matthew Arnold's poem entitled "Dover Beach." This is a meditation on the shore of the sea at night, and a very melancholy meditation, though full of depth and beauty. The part of it that I shall quote particularly refers to a certain effect of night sounds, which I am sure you have all noticed. Sounds appear to deepen as the night deepens; because as the noises of human and animal life gradually cease in sleep, those voices of nature that are never silent become more profoundly audible. You must have noticed how much louder the noise of the sea appears to be during the night than during the day. And the loudness of it gives us solemn and lonesome thoughts that we do not have at other times. Such were the thoughts that came to Matthew Arnold one night listening to the sea at Dover. He remembers how the Greek poets thousands of years ago had listened to the same sound with the same feeling and thought about human life.

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

There is a certain quality of cosmic emotion in these lines: the memory of the Greek poet, and of his thought about the same sound, gives a sense of relationship to all the humanity of past ages. In many of the poems which we have read about the moon, you have noticed that the same kind of emotion is given by the sight of the stars, the moon, or the deeps of the sky. But we cannot always have our emotions upon so large a scale; and the larger an emotion, the more apt it is to be a little vague, indefinite. Naturally philosophic thinkers prefer the vast; the majority of ordinary readers, on the other hand, prefer the direct appeal to common emotion and thought. There is nothing very grand about the following well-known poem by Bourdillon, which has become a classic. But although it is pretty and touching rather than grand, one cannot ever quite forget it after having read it; and it must have the true quality of world-poetry in it, because it has been translated into many languages. It will serve as a kind of ornamental ending or "tail-piece" to the present lecture.

The night has a thousand eyes,
  And the day but one;
Yet the light of the bright world dies
  With the dying sun!

The mind has a thousand eyes,
  And the heart but one;
Yet the light of a whole life dies
  When love is done!

CHAPTER XXVII

A NOTE ON JEAN INGELOW

As the term is drawing to a close, so that we shall have only two or three more days together, I have thought it better, having completed the last lecture, not to begin a new lecture upon the same scale, but to give a short lecture about some single famous poem. And I have chosen for this purpose Jean Ingelow's famous poem, "The High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire." Sometimes a poet becomes celebrated by the writing of one poem only. This happens to be the case with Miss Ingelow. She wrote several volumes of poems which were very popular in England and even in America. But popularity, during the lifetime of a writer, is no proof of literary merit; and it was not so in Miss Ingelow's case. She really wrote only one great poem; and by that one poem her name will always be preserved in the history of English literature.

The subject of this poem ought to interest you. The subject is only too familiar in Japan—a tidal wave (*tsunami*). There are few more terrible things possible for man to endure, in the form of what are called "natural visitations," than earthquakes and tidal waves. These two dreadful forms of calamity have been more common in this country than in Europe; but Europe has not been entirely exempt from them. There is only one other kind of natural calamity which can be at all compared with them—a volcanic eruption. But it is seldom indeed that a volcanic eruption, in any civilized country, produces such destruction of life as may be caused by an earthquake or a tidal wave.

It is about three hundred years since England had a great cataclysm of this sort; and it has never been forgotten

by the people of the coast where it happened. That coast happens to be quite low. At one time, indeed, it was little better than a great salt-marsh. But several miles inland there was very good farm-land, and plenty of farms and towns and villages. Miss Ingelow herself lived very near the scene of her poem. You must imagine a river flowing through the low country, widening very much toward the mouth—the river Lindis; Boston town stands near the bank. When the tidal wave came, the immediate effect was to force the river back, so that even distant parts of the country which the sea could not reach were flooded by the river. There is only one more thing to tell you about the poem—that it is written in English of the sixteenth century, yet there are only two or three queer words in it; everything is easy to understand. The verses are of different form, and the stanzas of irregular length.

> The old mayor climb'd the belfry tower,
> The ringers ran by two, by three;
> "Pull, if ye never pulled before;
> Good ringers, pull your best," quoth he.
> "Play uppe, play uppe, O Boston bells!
> Ply all your changes, all your swells,
> Play uppe 'The Brides of Enderby.'"

The church tower of St. Botolph's, which still stands, is the belfry tower here referred to. That was long before the time of telegraphs and railroads, and the only way of quickly sending news of danger through the country used to be to ring the great bells of the churches. It was therefore very important to have good bells; and every great church had a number of them, all of different sizes, so arranged that different tunes could be played upon them. You can still hear this kind of ringing in many parts of Europe. The tunes are usually very simple tunes known to all the people, and commonly hymn tunes, but not always. In time of danger it was agreed that particular tunes should be played. In the district of Lincolnshire, the tune that

meant danger was the tune of an old ballad, called "The Brides of Enderby," and when people heard the church bells play it they knew that something terrible was going to happen. I believe you know it requires a number of men to ring the bells in this way; and it used to be a regular calling. The word "changes" in the sixth line means variation in the modern musical sense; the word "swells" refers to a particular way of ringing two or more bells together, so that the sounds of all would blend into one great wave of tone.

You must understand that the whole story is being told by an old grandmother; she relates everything as she saw it and felt it, in a simple and touching way.

Men say it was a stolen tyde—
  The Lord that sent it, He knows all;
But in myne ears doth still abyde
  The message that the bells let fall:
And there was naught of strange, beside
The flights of mews and peewits pied
    By millions crouch'd on the old sea wall.

I sat and spun within the doore,
  My thread brake off, I raised myne eyes;
The level sun, like ruddy ore,
  Lay sinking in the barren skies;
And dark against day's golden death
She moved where Lindis wandereth,
My sonne's faire wife, Elizabeth.

  "Cusha! Cusha! Cusha," calling,
  Ere the early dews were falling,
  Farre away I heard her song.
  "Cusha! Cusha!" all along;
  Where the reedy Lindis floweth,
          Floweth, floweth;
  From the meads where melick groweth
  Faintly came her milking song—

  "Cusha! Cusha! Cusha!" calling,
  "For the dews will soone be falling;

Leave your meadow grasses mellow,
Mellow, mellow;
Quit your cowslips, cowslips yellow;
Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot;
Quit the stalks of parsely hollow,
Hollow, hollow;
Come uppe Jetty, rise and follow,
From the clovers lift your head;
Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot,
Come uppe Jetty, rise and follow,
Jetty, to the milking shed."

The expression "stolen tyde" in the first stanza is strange to you, I think; it is strange even to English readers who are not aware that country-folk often use the word "stolen" in the sense of contrary to nature, monstrous, magical. Now you have the old grandmother talking to you, recalling her memories. She tells you that upon the evening of the great tidal wave, the first thing that startled her was the sound of the church bells signalling danger. It startled her so that she broke the thread which she was spinning at the door; then she looked up to see if there was anything unusual in sky or field. Nothing in the sky; it was what she called "a barren sky"—that is, a sky without a single cloud; and the sun was sinking beautifully, making all the west full of gold light. Nothing in the field—no, but what was that upon the sea-wall? Of course you know what a sea-wall is; they are very common in Japan, built to protect fishing villages or low coasts against the surf of heavy storms. Yes; there was something strange on the sea-wall; millions of sea-birds were crowded there—white gulls, and parti-coloured gulls, called peewits from their melancholy cry. The danger was probably from the sea—but what was it? While wondering what it could be, the old woman heard her son's wife singing to the cows. I am not sure whether you know about this custom. Milk-cows, in England, are left all day to graze in the meadows, when the weather is fine; and at evening they are called home, milk-

ed, and put in their stables. The men or boys who take care of them, or the girls—dairymaids as they are termed—often sing a kind of song to call the animals home; they come at once when they hear the song. Names are given to them, usually names indicating the appearance of the cow, or something peculiar about it. In this song, the name Whitefoot probably means a red or a black cow with pure white feet. The name Lightfoot might mean a thoroughbred cow—that is, a cow of very fine race—with a particularly light quick walk. The name Jetty probably refers to a perfectly black cow, black as jet. There is nothing else to explain, except the queer old word "melick," the name of a particular kind of grass. "Cowslips" are, you know, long yellow flowers, very common in European fields.

If it be long, ay, long ago,
  When I beginne to think howe long,
Againe I hear the Lindis flow,
  Swift as an arrowe, sharpe and strong;
And all the aire, it seemeth mee,
Bin full of floating bells (sayth shee),
That ring the tune of Enderby.

Alle fresh the level pasture lay,
  And not a shadowe mote be seene,
Save where full fyve good miles away
  The steeple tower'd from out the greene;
And lo! the great bell farre and wide
Was heard in all the country side
That Saturday at eventide.

The swanherds where their sedges are
  Moved on in sunset's golden breath,
The shepherde lads I heard afarre,
  And my sonne's wife, Elizabeth;
Till floating o'er the grassy sea
Came downe that kyndly message free,
The "Brides of Mavis Enderby."

Then some look'd uppe into the sky,
  And all along where Lindis flows

To where the goodly vessels lie,
  And where the lordly steeple shows.
They sayde, "And why should this thing be?
What danger lowers by land or sea?
They ring the tune of Enderby!

"For evil news from Mablethorpe,
  Of pyrate galleys warping downe;
For shippes ashore beyond the scorpe,
  They have not spared to wake the towne:
But while the west bin red to see,
And stormes be none, and pyrates flee,
Why ring 'The Brides of Enderby'?"

The conditional mood at the beginning of the first of the stanzas just quoted, is only suggested; there is no sequence, no main clause. You must understand the meaning to be something like this: "You ask me if it was long ago. If it was long ago! Ah, perhaps, it was long ago—yet when I try to think how long ago it was, I see and hear everything so plainly that it seems to me even now." In the fourth line, the adjectives "sharp and strong" refer, of course, to the arrow—a heavy war-arrow would fly much faster and with a louder sound than the sporting arrow. Archery was still kept up in the sixteenth century. But the old woman is not thinking only of the arrow; she is thinking of the sound made by the strong current of the river. It had a sharp sound, she tells us, like the sound of a heavy arrow. Notice in the sixth line the use of "bin" for "is." In the following stanza, you need only observe the curious old perfect "mote" used where we would now say "might" or "could." In the third line, you will find the term "good miles." Why should people speak of a good mile or a good distance? In such places the word "good" has the sense of "at least," "fully," "not less than."

The description goes on very vividly; after speaking of the beautiful clear weather, with nothing in all the level of the flat country to break the skyline, except the far-away

shape of the church steeple, the old woman speaks of the swans in the high river grass, the shouting of the shepherd boys, calling home their sheep, and the sweet song of the young wife waiting to milk the cows as they return from pasture. There was nothing at all of danger visible; and the peasants wondered why the bells sounded danger. Observe in the fourth of this group of stanzas the use of the word "lowers" in the sixth line. To-day we more commonly spell it "lour"—though originally the meaning was very much the same. When clouds hang down very low, it is a sign of storm; when brows are lowered in a frown it is a sign of anger. So when we speak of a lowering sky we mean a threatening sky; but however we spell the word, we pronounce it with a very full sound of "ow" in the sense of "to threaten." "What danger is threatening us from the land or from the sea?" That is what the people ask each other. Why do they ring the bells in that way? If pirates had attacked the neighbouring port of Mablethorpe, or if there were any ships wrecked beyond the rock-line (scorpe), then there would be some reason for calling up all the people. The expression "wake" the town, does not mean to awaken, but to summon, to call. This is a quaint idiom.

Very suddenly, though, the old grandmother learns what the danger is:

I look'd without, and lo! my sonne
  Came riding downe with might and main:
He raised a shout as he drew on,
  Till all the welkin rang again,
"Elizabeth! Elizabeth!"
(A sweeter woman ne'er drew breath
Than my sonne's wife, Elizabeth.)

"The olde sea-wall (he cried) is downe,
  The rising tide comes on apace,
And boats adrift in yonder towne
  Go sailing uppe the market-place."
He shook as one that looks on death:

"God save you, mother!" straight he saith;
"Where is my wife, Elizabeth?"

"Good sonne, where Lindis winds away,
With her two bairns I mark'd her long;
And ere yon bells beganne to play
Afar I heard her milking song."
He looked across the grassy lea,
To right, to left, "Ho Enderby!"
They rang "The Brides of Enderby!"

With that he cried and beat his breast;
For, lo! along the river's bed
A mighty eygre reared his crest,
And uppe the Lindis raging sped.
It swept with thunderous noises loud;
Shaped like a curling snow-white cloud,
Or like a demon in a shroud.

In the fourth line of the first of the above stanzas occurs the word "welkin," much less often used now than formerly. It most commonly signifies the sky, the vault of heaven. But we may often understand the word merely in the sense of atmosphere, the whole expanse of blue air. Indeed the word chiefly lingers in modern use in this meaning, as is illustrated by the common idiom "to make the welkin ring." This simply means to make all the air shake and resound with a noise or a shout. It is thus that the word is used in the present poem.

In the following stanza observe the word "apace"—it is now very old-fashioned. The meaning is "very quickly" or "suddenly"—so that it does not at all appear to be what it means. We are apt to think of the verb "to pace," meaning to walk slowly with full strides; but apace is exactly the contrary of slowly. In the next stanza the word "bairns," meaning young children, is familiar to anybody acquainted with Scotch dialect; and we have got accustomed to think of the word as purely Scotch. But it is not: it is very old English, and is much used in the provinces outside of Scotland. In the next stanza we find an especially

curious and very ancient word, "eygre." This word can be found in the most ancient Anglo-Saxon poems, and it still lingers in various English provincial dialects. But it is not often spelt in this way; the common spelling is "eagre." It means an immense wave or billow; and it has a very weird effect in this stanza. For it is the real tidal wave that the old woman describes by that terrible word. All the flood that had come before was only the precursor of the great sea-rising to follow. Now it comes roaring up the river, with a sound of thunder—all black below, all white above with foam, so that it suggests to the old grandmother's terrified fancy the idea of a great black demon moving with a funeral shroud thrown over his head. You must understand that she sees the wave at an angle, not in front. Now comes an excellent description of the immediate result of the wave.

And rearing Lindis backward pressed,
  Shook all her trembling bankes amaine;
Then madly at the eygre's breast
  Flung uppe her weltering walls again.
Then bankes came downe with ruin and rout—
Then beaten foam flew round about—
Then all the mighty floods were out.

So farre, so fast the eygre drave,
  The heart had hardly time to beat,
Before a shallow seething wave
  Sobbed in the grasses at oure feet:
The feet had hardly time to flee
Before it brake against the knee,
And all the world was in the sea.

You must understand that the Lindis River flowing through a very low country, constantly liable to inundation, has to be confined between artificial banks to provide against accidents. In England there are but very few rivers to which it has been found necessary to furnish artificial banks; but in America many great rivers have to be thus banked for immense distances. For instance, the great Mis-

sissippi River flows between artificial banks for a distance of many hundreds of miles; and when you read of terrible floods in the Southern States, it generally means that the banks have been somewhere broken. These banks rise much above the surrounding country, like great walls. So it was in the landscape of the present poem – the river was flowing between high banks like walls. When the great wave came from the sea, moving at a tremendous speed, the first effect was to check and throw back the river current; and this made a great counter wave. But the counter wave could not resist the pressure of a sea wave; and the consequence was that the whole force of the river was diverted sidewards, with the result that the banks were at once broken to pieces. That caused an immediate inundation of fresh water; but the fresh water inundation was almost instantly followed by the rush of the sea, a much more dangerous and terrible affair.

In the fourth line of the stanza about the rising of the river, you must understand the word "weltering" to have the meaning of the word "liquid;" and the term "weltering walls" to signify only high waves rising like walls in vain opposition to the mighty tidal wave. In the stanza following, the term "shallow seething wave" refers to the first burst of the fresh water over the country; but the last three lines of the same stanza refer to the rush of the sea following after. Before a person had time even to move, the water was up to his knees; the next minute it was high enough to cover the greater part of the houses.

Upon the roofe we sate that night,
  The noise of bells went sweeping by;
I marked the lofty beacon light
  Stream from the church tower, red and high—
A lurid mark and dread to see;
And awsome bells they were to mee,
That in the dark rang "Enderby."

They rang the sailor lads to guide
  From roofe to roofe, who fearless rowed;

And I—my sonne was at my side,
  And yet the ruddy beacon glowed;
And yet he moaned beneath his breath,
"O come in life, or come in death!
O lost! my love, Elizabeth!"

Some of the houses, of two or three stories and strongly built, withstood the flood for a time, and people took refuge upon the roofs. Then from the neighbouring port sailors came with boats, and went from roof to roof, to take the people away. The phrase "sailor lads" does not necessarily mean sailor boys or young sailors, though the English "lad" strictly means a person between the ages of boyhood and of manhood—let us say from sixteen to twenty-one. That is the strict meaning; but for a very long time this word had a caressing meaning, when it is attached to another word so as to make such compounds, as for example, soldier-lads, sailor-lads. In these instances the word "lad" has a meaning something like "dear" or "good." The beacon fire, lighted upon the top of a church tower, is described as "lurid." This word "lurid" has somewhat changed its meaning in modern times. It is from the Latin, and the Latin meaning was a dim green or a very dim yellow. The idea suggested by the Latin word was the gloomy light in a deep forest, or the indistinct light in a time of eclipse. But modern writers have used it a great deal, and somewhat incorrectly, in the signification of red light—light having an awful colour; for the ancient word always conveyed some idea of fear, and this idea has never been lost in English. Whenever you see in literature something described as lurid, you may be sure that the meaning is a terrible and unnatural light. Of course the church tower, used for a beacon light, had a square flat roof. As a matter of fact, when we see the word "church tower" used in English, a flat-topped tower is meant; the pointed form being more correctly indicated by the word "spire."

So much for the scene described—the tragedy continues with the lamentation of the sorrowing husband for his lost

wife and children. He asks her to come to him alive or dead, so that he may at least know what has become of her in that awful night. If you think a moment about the matter, you will see that the expression is quite natural; people usually almost expect that those whom they loved will give them some signs in case of sudden death—such as a visit in dreams, or an apparitional visit. In this case the wife comes to her husband dead, but not as a ghost:

> And didst thou visit him no more?
> Thou didst, thou didst, my daughter deare;
> The waters laid thee at his doore,
> Ere yet the early dawn was clear.
> Thy pretty bairns in fast embrace,
> The lifted sun shone on thy face,
> Downe drifted to thy dwelling-place.

Many poets have used this fancy, in poetry about death by drowning, and perhaps the idea first came into superior poetry with the study of the popular ballads. In many English ballads we read about the corpse of a mother and a child being carried by some flood or storm to the door of the husband; sometimes the floating body which thus returns is that of a betrayed girl. The idea is artistically excellent, because it is so natural that no amount of use can wear it out. It was a favourite incident with Rossetti. The narrative continues, with certain reflections:

> That flow strew'd wrecks about the grass,
> That ebbe swept out the flocks to sea;
> A fatal ebbe and flow, alas!
> To manye more than myne and mee:
> But each will mourn his own (she saith).
> And sweeter woman ne'er drew breath
> Than my sonne's wife, Elizabeth.

In this stanza you must understand that the word "flow" means the incoming tide, as ebb means the outgoing tide, though the use of the word "flow," all by itself, in the first

line is a little unusual. The fifth line is the line to which I particularly wish to call your attention:

But each will mourn his own.

This line, simple as any commonplace, simple as the most trite of household phrases, is nevertheless, by reason of its opportune use in this place, a very fine bit of human poetry. The old grandmother remembers and relates the great destruction of life, both of animals and human beings; and in the recollection of that immense calamity, with the vision of a thousand past sorrows before her, she suddenly feels like reproaching herself for talking so much about her own particular grief. She apologizes for this involuntary selfishness by citing the old saying that each person feels his or her own sorrow most:—"each will mourn his own." Perhaps it is bad, yet who can help it, and who can fail to find a kindly excuse for it?

Really that is almost the best line in the poem; and I want to talk about it, because it suggests so many things. It is quite true that each person best understands sorrow or joy by his or her sorrow and joy; and in a certain way, a person is not wrong in imagining his joy or pain to be the greatest joy or the greatest pain in the whole world. There are many proverbial sayings, quoted in opposition to the indulgence of personal feeling; I suppose that they really serve a good purpose by checking a tendency to over-effusiveness. For example, you have heard many sayings about the admiration of a mother for her child, to the effect that every mother thinks her own child to be the very best child alive. So a son invariably thinks that his own mother is the best of all mothers; he may not say so, but he is very likely to think so. And there are household phrases relating to a corresponding feeling on the part of brother and sister, husband and wife, father and son. The tendency to laugh at or to repress expressions of such innocent feeling certainly have their special use: we must so think of them. But most people utter the mockery, and there stop

—without asking themselves anything about the reason and about the truth of such feeling. After all, there is a great deal of truth in it. The value of an affection, the value of a personality, to each of us is quite special. The son who thinks of his mother as the best of all mothers thinks quite truly so far as the relation of that mother to himself is concerned. She is the best of all mothers for him; and no human being could ever take her place. So with the relation of the child to the parent. It is a question of relativity. Everybody feels this—though it is not easily expressed by simple minds, which can only think as the old grandmother thinks in the story, that each one cannot help "mourning his own," and faintly justify by an appeal to universal experience, the declaration that no one could be sweeter or better than the one who has been lost.

The poem concludes with the memories of the song and the singer:

I shall never hear her more
By the reedy Lindis shore,
"Cusha! Cusha! Cusha!" calling,
Ere the early dews be falling;
I shall never hear her song,
"Cusha! Cusha!" all along,
Where the sunny Lindis floweth,
Goeth, floweth;
From the meads where melick groweth,
When the water winding down,
Onward floweth to the towne.

I shall never see her more
Where the reeds and rushes quiver,
Shiver, quiver;
Stand beside the sobbing river,
Sobbing, throbbing, in its falling
To the sandy, lonesome shore;
I shall never hear her calling,
"Leave your meadow grasses mellow,
Mellow, mellow;
Quit your cowslips, cowslips yellow;

Come uppe Whitefoot, come uppe Lightfoot;
Quit your pipes of parsley hollow,
Hollow, hollow;
Come uppe Lightfoot, rise and follow;
Lightfoot, Whitefoot,
From your clovers lift the head;
Come uppe Jetty, follow, follow,
Jetty, to the milking shed."

CHAPTER XXVIII

"THREE SILENCES"

I HAVE said in another lecture that Swinburne and Rossetti had no imitators of any worth to literature. Nevertheless it sometimes happens that a new poet, although not imitating his predecessors, may so represent in his verse a blending of the best qualities of some of them, that we must say, this man's work was developed by the study of such and such singers. We say that Tennyson is the poetical descendant of Keats, but we never could say that Tennyson imitated Keats. You will now understand exactly what I mean when I say that Arthur O'Shaughnessy, the author of the poem entitled "Three Silences," is the descendant both of Swinburne and of Rossetti. He has united some of the best qualities of both—of Swinburne as to form and as to colour, of Rossetti as to feeling. This poem shows his relation to Swinburne and Rossetti, more especially to Rossetti. The feeling borders upon mystical tenderness, but you will discern in it the melancholy doubt of the nineteenth century. Perhaps this only adds to its sweetness.

We may suppose that the poet is referring to the three great sorrows of human existence. The first great sorrow might be, for example, the death of one's mother—a shock of pain which the child cannot even fully understand as a fact. If he asks the meaning of it, really no one can tell him; and the tender things that are told him in order to console him, do not in the least illuminate for him the awful mystery of the fact.

The next great sorrow might be the death of the woman he loved. As Huxley says, the man who stands with his dead before the abyss of the eternal, has questions to ask.

Some of them he asks his own heart, some of them he asks the dead—but there is no answer. The second shock of death finds him very much wiser and stronger than he was when a child, yet the mystery is not any nearer to solution for him; it is even further away.

Later come other surprises of pain—doubts of humanity, doubts of the worth of life, doubts of everything; and, in the moment of some great sorrow, one turns back to the habit of childhood, to the resource of prayer. And there is no answer.

We can suppose these to be the Three Silences. Nevertheless this is not a philosophical poem but a love poem. It is in a moment of disappointed affection, in the moment of a fourth silence, that the poet remembers the other three periods of pain. This is what gives the poem its extraordinary qualities of melancholy and tenderness.

'Tis a world of silences. I gave a cry
  In the first sorrow my heart could not withstand;
I saw men pause, and listen, and look sad,
As though an answer in their hearts they had;
  Some turn'd away, some came and took my hand,
For all reply.

I stood beside a grave. Years had pass'd by;
  Sick with unanswer'd life I turn'd to death,
And whisper'd all my question to the grave,
And watch'd the flowers desolately wave,
  And the grass stir on it with a fitful breath,
For all reply.

I raised my eyes to heaven; my prayer went high
  Into the luminous mystery of the blue;
My thought of God was purer than a flame,
And God it seem'd a little nearer came,
  Then pass'd; and greater still the silence grew,
For all reply.

—But you! If I can speak before I die,
  I spoke to you with all my soul, and when

I look at you 'tis still my soul you see.
Oh, in your heart was there no word for me?
  All would have answer'd had you answer'd then
With even a sigh.

The last line but one is the most beautiful in the whole poem. Love casts out sorrow and fear and doubt in the first moment of its ecstasy; the lover says that had she answered, the grave and the heaven and God himself would have answered at the same time, because in perfect happiness there is no doubt and no fear and no regret. You will observe that this approaches to the tone of Rossetti, and that there is nevertheless within it a something which is not of Rossetti, something sweeter and simpler, and in spite of this simplicity, equally artistic.

CHAPTER XXIX

ON ROSSETTI'S "SEA-LIMITS"

. . . THE things that we think the most simple and common are the very hardest of all to express satisfactorily in verse or in prose. The poem which we are going to study together is a grand example of such common difficulty overcome.

I presume that all of you have heard the sound of the sea—are quite familiar with it; and I presume that all of you have experienced particularly strange feelings when listening to the sound of the sea, either as children or as men. When we are all alone on the sea-shore, anywhere; and that we hear the sound of a great tide rolling in, we do not feel particularly merry. We do not want to laugh and shout,—not at least after the first pleasure of pure air and of looking at the vast space has been satisfied. On the contrary you will acknowledge, I think, that we feel a little serious, perhaps a little sad. It is not exactly that the sea makes us afraid; it is a feeling far too complex to be explained by anybody; we can, only by psychological analysis, discover a part of the elements composing it. Yet how many would think of trying to express it in words?

Of course the whole of it cannot be so expressed. We can only utter some of the feeling and some of the thoughts that are awakened within us by the sound of the sea. One of these thoughts or rather ideas, is of enormous antiquity. Any person whose mind has become at all mature is apt to think of the sea in relation to time; and to be put in mind by its roar of the innumerable thousands of years during which that sound has never ceased. That is a very common idea; and it is an idea that touches a chord of melan-

choly in most of us, because it leads us to think how very brief human life is.

Anybody who thinks out these thoughts,—about the cause of them,—and about the cause of feeling relating to them,—is almost certain to obtain, through personal experience alone, some further knowledge respecting the psychical effect of the sound of the sea. It is not by any means the only sound that produces in the mind that vague melancholy of which I have been speaking. The sound of a wind in a great forest, especially in a forest of pine trees, very much resembles the roar of the sea, as heard at a distance—and it is just as melancholy. Again, in the time of some great festivity, when we are moving about in the streets of some great city, crowded with rejoicing people, we do not notice anything peculiar about the vast noise. We are too near to the noise to estimate it properly. But, if we hear the noise of the crowd, the tumult of that city at a distance of half a mile or thereabouts, we suddenly think, "How much like the roar of the sea!" Now it is about these three forms of sound,—of the sea, of the forest, and of the city,—that Rossetti's poem has been composed; and you will find that, old as the subject is, and old as the thoughts are, the result is in the true sense sublime.

THE SEA-LIMITS

Consider the sea's listless chime:
  Time's self it is, made audible,—
  The murmur of the earth's own shell.
Secret continuance sublime
  Is the sea's end: our sight may pass
  No furlong further. Since time was,
This sound hath told the lapse of time.

No quiet, which is death's,—it hath
  The mournfulness of ancient life,
  Enduring always at dull strife.
As the world's heart of rest and wrath,
  Its painful pulse is in the sands.
  Last utterly, the whole sky stands,

Grey and not known, along its path.

Listen alone beside the sea,
  Listen alone among the woods;
  Those voices of twin solitudes
Shall have one sound alike to thee:
  Hark where the murmurs of thronged men
  Surge and sink back and surge again,—
Still the one voice of wave and tree.

Gather a shell from the strown beach
  And listen at its lips: they sigh
  The same desire and mystery,
The echo of the whole sea's speech.
  And all mankind is thus at heart
  Not anything but what thou art:
And Earth, Sea, Man, are all in each.

Listen to the restless musical sound of the sea. That is the very sound of Time itself,—time made audible to our ears. Or we may say that it is the sound of great shell of the world—heard as we hear a murmuring in a shell when we put it close to our ears. You cannot see where the sea ends; the mystery of its extent is in itself a sublime thing. We cannot see even one furlong,—one eighth of a mile beyond the apparent horizon—and the line is an illustration to our sight. Since the beginning of time, the sound of the sea has marked the passing of time: and yet it will continue to mark the passing of time through innumerable years to come.

By the sea there is no silence, no stillness. Silence and stillness belong only to death and the sea is not dead, but alive. And the sound of its unrest reminds us of life. Ancient life, always striving, always suffering, always enduring. Like the life of man, this life of the sea too is of the earth,—belongs to it, animates it, beats through it with a beating as of hearts. Hearts suffering silently in anger. And again it is surrounded everywhere by the mystery of the grey sky,—just as the life of man is everywhere bounded by the mystery of the infinite.

If you stand alone on the sea-shore and listen to the

sound of the waves; and if you afterwards stand in some great forest alone, and listen to the wild moaning through the trees,—you will find that those two great sounds of sea and forest,—both of those voices of solitude—are almost the same to your ears. You could scarcely tell the difference between one sound and the other. And, again, if you go to some great city and listen to the roar of its life,—the sound of thousands of footsteps, thousands of voices, thousands of vehicles,—you will find that this sound of a great city life is very much like the sound of the sea. It is not steady; now it is louder, now lower,—just like the sound of the sea with its waves, or of the wood with its winds. It is a sound of surging,—of waves; though these are waves of life, human life, not waves of water or of wind.

Now take a shell from the beach of the sea,—where they are scattered by hundreds,—and hold it close to your ear. In that shell you will hear the same sound,—a melancholy sound, a mysterious sound, a sound as of sorrow and desire. All the voice of the sea is in that shell like an echo. And if you think for a moment—remembering that the sound which you hear in the sea-shell is really the sound made by the beating of your own heart, then you will understand that yourself and all mankind,—that the Earth, and Man, and Sea, are all really but one and the same. Each and all of them represents the mystery of life, the sorrow of Being, the sorrow of infinite desire.

There are a few expressions in this poem, needing explanation—especially because of the extremely condensed form of the utterance. In the first line you have the word "listless chime." The word "chime" refers particularly to the musical tone of a bell; but as it also conveys the sense of succession of sound, the poet has used it here to signify a continuous musical sound, or succession of sound. "Listless" has many significations, such as idle, indifferent, languid. The last meaning is the meaning here. The poet is talking about the languid, melancholy, ceaseless, but musical voice of the sea. In the fourth line I have para-

phrased the expression "secret continuance" as referring to extent in space; but you are free to consider it as signifying extent of time—so that it gives us not only the meaning of immensity in extension, but also suggests to us the mystery of the enormous age of the ocean.

In the second stanza the fourth line is very difficult—containing, as it does, the seemingly contradictory phrase about the world's "heart of rest and wrath." The states of rest and of anger at first thought would appear to be directly opposed to each other. But the poet is really referring to anger hidden, restrained, sullen anger—the discontent with conditions which must be borne. Again you have the expression about the pulse of the sea in the sand. Of course the suggestion is that of the pulse of man's life also in the sand, or at least in the dust of the earth, from which all human bodies are shapen. It is only another way of saying that the life of the sea and the life of man and the life of the world are really, in a certain sense, one and the same.

CHAPTER XXX

IONICA

I AM going now to talk about a very rare kind of poetry in a very rare little book, like fine wine in a small and precious flask. The author never put his name to the book—indeed for many years it was not known who wrote the volume. We now know that the author was a school teacher called William Johnson who, later in life, coming into a small fortune, changed his name to William Cory. He was born some time about 1823, and died in 1892. He was, I believe, an Oxford man and was assistant master of Eton College for a number of years. Judging from his poems, he must have found pleasure in his profession as well as pain. There is a strange sadness nearly always, but this sadness is mixed with expressions of love for the educational establishment which he directed, and for the students whose minds he helped to form. He must have been otherwise a very shy man. Scarcely anything seems to be known about him after his departure from educational circles, although everybody of taste now knows his poems. I wish to speak of them because I think that literary graduates of this university ought to be at least familiar with the name "Ionica." At all events you should know something about the man and about the best of his poems. If you should ask why so little has yet been said about him in books on English literature, I would answer that in the first place he was a very small poet writing in the time of giants, having for competitors Tennyson, Browning and others. He could scarcely make his small pipe heard in the thunder of those great organ tones. In the second place his verses were never written to please the public at all. They were written only

for fine scholars, and even the titles of many of them cannot be explained by a person devoid of some Greek culture. So the little book, which appeared quite early in the Victorian Age, was soon forgotten. Being forgotten it ran out of print and disappeared. Then somebody remembered that it had existed. I have told you that it was like the tone of a little pipe or flute as compared with the organ music of the larger poets. But the little pipe happened to be a Greek pipe—the melody was very sweet and very strange and old, and people who had heard it once soon wanted to hear it again. But they could not get it. Copies of the first edition fetched extraordinary sums. Some few years ago a new edition appeared, but this too is now out of print and is fetching fancy prices. However, you must not expect anything too wonderful from this way of introducing the subject. The facts only show that the poems are liked by persons of refinement and wealth. I hope to make you like some of them, but the difficulties of so doing are considerable, because of the extremely English character of some pieces and the extremely Greek tone of others. There is also some uneven work. The poet is not in all cases successful. Sometimes he tried to write society verse, and his society verse must be considered a failure. The best pieces are his Greek pieces and some compositions on love subjects of a most delicate and bewitching kind.

Of course the very name "Ionica" suggests Greek work, a collection of pieces in Ionic style. But you must not think that this means only repetitions of ancient subjects. This author brings the Greek feeling back again into the very heart of English life sometimes, or makes an English fact illustrate a Greek fable. Some delightful translations from the Greek there are, but less than half a dozen in all.

I scarcely know how to begin—what piece to quote first. But perhaps the little fancy called "Mimnermus in Church" is the best known, and the one which will best serve to introduce us to the character of Cory. Before quoting it, however, I must explain the title briefly. Mimnermus was

an old Greek philosopher and poet who thought that all things in the world are temporary, that all hope of a future life is vain, that there is nothing worth existing for except love, and that without affection one were better dead. There are, no doubt, various modern thinkers who tell you much the same thing, and this little poem exhibits such modern feeling in a Greek dress. I mean that we have here a picture of a young man, a young English scholar, listening in Church to Christian teaching, but answering that teaching with the thought of the old Greeks. There is of course one slight difference; the modern conception of love is perhaps a little wider in range than that of the old Greeks. There is more of the ideal in it.

MIMNERMUS IN CHURCH

You promise heavens free from strife,
  Pure truth, and perfect change of will;
But sweet, sweet is this human life,
  So sweet, I fain would breathe it still;
Your chilly stars I can forego,
This warm kind world is all I know.

You say there is no substance here,
  One great reality above:
Back from that void I shrink in fear,
  And child-like hide myself in love:
Show me what angels feel. Till then,
I cling, a mere weak man, to men.

You bid me lift my mean desires
  From faltering lips and fitful veins
To sexless souls, ideal quires,
  Unwearied voices, wordless strains:
My mind with fonder welcome owns
One dear dead friend's remembered tones.

Forsooth the present we must give
  To that which cannot pass away;
All beauteous things for which we live

By laws of time and space decay.
But oh, the very reason why
I clasp them, is because they die.

The preacher has been talking to his congregation about the joys of Heaven. "There," he says, "there will be no quarrelling, no contest, no falsehood, and all evil dispositions will be entirely changed to good." The poet answers, "This world and this life are full of beauty and of joy for me. I do not want to die, I want to live. I do not wish to go to that cold region of stars about which you teach. I only know this world and I find in it warm hearts and precious affection. You say that this world is a phantom, unsubstantial, unreal, and that the only reality is above in Heaven. To me that Heaven appears but as an awful emptiness. I shrink from it in terror, and like a child seek for consolation in human love. It is no use to talk to me about angels until you can prove to me that angels can feel happier than men. I prefer to remain with human beings. You say that I ought to wish for higher things than this world can give, that here minds are unsteady and weak, hearts fickle and selfish, and you talk of souls without sex, imaginary concerts of perfect music, tireless singing in Heaven, and the pleasure of conversation without speech. But all the happiness that we know is received from our fellow beings. I remember the voice of one dead friend with deeper love and pleasure than any images of Heaven could ever excite in my mind."

The last stanza needs no paraphrasing, but it deserves some comment, for it is the expression of one great difference between the old Greek feeling in regard to life and death, and all modern religious feeling on the same subject. You can read through hundreds of beautiful inscriptions which were placed over the Greek tombs. They are contained in "The Greek Anthology." You will find there almost nothing about hope of a future life, or about Heaven. They are not for the most part sad; they are actually joyous in many cases. You would say that the Greek mind thought thus

about death—"I have had my share of the beauty and the love of this world, and I am grateful for this enjoyment, and now it is time to go to sleep." There is actually an inscription to the effect, "I have supped well of the banquet of life." The Eastern religions, including Christianity, taught that because everything in the world is uncertain, impermanent, perishable, therefore we ought not to allow our minds to love worldly things. But the Greek mind, as expressed by the old epigraphy in the cemeteries, not less than by the teaching of Mimnermus, took exactly the opposite view. "O children of men, it is because beauty and pleasure and love and light can last only for a little while, it is exactly because of this that you should love them. Why refuse to enjoy the present because it cannot last for ever?" And at a much later day the Persian poet Omar took, you will remember, precisely the same view. You need not think that it would be wise to accept such teaching for a rule of life, but it has a certain value as a balance to the other extreme view, that we should make ourselves miserable in this world with the idea of being rewarded in another, concerning which we have no positive knowledge. The lines with which the poem concludes at least deserve to be thought about—

> But oh, the very reason why
> I clasp them, is because they die.

We shall later on take some of the purely Greek work of Cory for study, but I want now to interest you in the more modern part of it. The charm of the following passage you will better feel by remembering that the writer was then a schoolmaster at Eton, and that the verses particularly express the love which he felt for his students—a love the more profound, perhaps, because the circumstances of the teacher's position obliged him to appear cold and severe, obliged him to suppress natural impulses of affection and generosity. The discipline of the masters in English public schools is much more severe than the discipline to which

the students are subjected. The boys enjoy a great deal of liberty. The masters may be said to have none. Yet there are men so constituted that they learn to greatly love the profession. The title of this poem is "Reparabo," which means "I will atone."

The world will rob me of my friends,
  For time with her conspires;
But they shall both to make amends
  Relight my slumbering fires.

For while my comrades pass away
  To bow and smirk and gloze,
Come others, for as short a stay;
  And dear are these as those.

And who was this? they ask; and then
  The loved and lost I praise:
"Like you they frolicked; they are men;
  "Bless ye my later days."

Why fret? the hawks I trained are flown:
  'Twas nature bade them range;
I could not keep their wings half-grown,
  I could not bar the change.

With lattice opened wide I stand
  To watch their eager flight;
With broken jesses in my hand
  I muse on their delight.

And, oh! if one with sullied plume
  Should droop in mid career,
My love makes signals,—"There is room,
  Oh, bleeding wanderer, here."

This comparison of the educator to a falconer, and of the students to young hawks eager to break their jesses, seems to an Englishman particularly happy in reference to Eton, from which so many youths pass into the ranks of the army and navy. The line about bowing, smirking and

glozing, refers to the comparative insincerity of the higher society into which so many of the scholars must eventually pass. "Smirking" suggests insincere smiles, "glozing" implies tolerating or lightly passing over faults or wrongs or serious matters that should not be considered lightly. Society is essentially insincere and artificial in all countries, but especially so in England. The old Eton master thinks, however, that he knows the moral character of the boys, the strong principles which make its foundation, and he trusts that they will be able in a general way to do only what is right, in spite of conventions and humbug.

As I told you before, we know very little about the personal life of Cory, who must have been a very reserved man; but a poet puts his heart into his verses as a general rule, and there are many little poems in this book that suggest to us an unhappy love episode. These are extremely pretty and touching, the writer in most cases confessing himself unworthy of the person who charmed him; but the finest thing of the kind is a composition which he suggestively entitled "A Fable"—that is to say, a fable in the Greek sense, an emblem or symbol of truth.

An eager girl, whose father buys
  Some ruined thane's foresaken hall,
Explores the new domain, and tries
  Before the rest to view it all.

I think you have often noted the fact here related; when a family moves to a new house, it is the child, or the youngest daughter, who is the first to explore all the secrets of the new residence, and whose young eyes discover things which the older folks had not noticed.

Alone she lifts the latch, and glides
  Through many a sadly curtained room,
As daylight through the doorway slides
  And struggles with the muffled gloom.

With mimicries of dance she wakes
  The lordly gallery's silent floor,

And climbing up on tip-toe, makes
  The old-world mirror smile once more.

With tankards dry she chills her lip,
  With yellowing laces veils the head,
And leaps in pride of ownership
  Upon the faded marriage bed.

A harp in some dark nook she sees,
  Long left a prey to heat and frost,
She smites it: can such tinklings please?
  Is not all worth, all beauty, lost?

Ah! who'd have thought such sweetness clung
  To loose neglected strings like those?
They answered to whate'er was sung,
  And sounded as the lady chose.

Her pitying finger hurried by
  Each vacant space, each slackened chord;
Nor would her wayward zeal let die
  The music-spirit she restored.

The fashion quaint, the time-worn flaws,
  The narrow range, the doubtful tone,
All was excused awhile, because
  It seemed a creature of her own.

Perfection tires; the new in old,
  The mended wrecks that need her skill,
Amuse her. If the truth be told,
  She loves the triumphs of her will.

With this, she dares herself persuade,
  She'll be for many a month content,
Quite sure no duchess ever played
  Upon a sweeter instrument.

And thus in sooth she can beguile
  Girlhood's romantic hours: but soon
She yields to taste and mode and style,
  A siren of the gay saloon;

And wonders how she once could like
  Those drooping wires, those failing notes,
And leaves her toy for bats to strike
  Amongst the cobwebs and the motes.

But enter in, thou freezing wind,
  And snap the harp-strings one by one,
It was a maiden blithe and kind:
  They felt her touch; their task is done.

In this charming little study we know that the harp described is not a harp; it is the loving heart of an old man, at least of a man beyond the usual age of lovers. He has described and perhaps adored some beautiful person who seemed to care for him, and who played upon his heart, with her whims, caresses, smiles, much as one would play upon the strings of a harp. She did not mean to be cruel at all, nor even insincere. It is even probable that she really in those times thought that she loved the man, and under the charms of the girl the man became a different being; the old-fashioned mind brightened, the old-fashioned heart exposed its hidden treasures of tenderness and wisdom and sympathy. Very much like playing upon a long forgotten instrument, was the relation between the maiden and the man—not only because he resembled such an instrument in the fact of belonging emotionally and intellectually to another generation, but also because his was a heart whose true music had long been silent, unheard by the world. Undoubtedly the maiden meant no harm, but she caused a great deal of pain, for at a later day, becoming a great lady of society, she forgot all about this old friendship, or perhaps wondered why she ever wasted her time in talking to such a strange old-fashioned professor. Then the affectionate heart is condemned to silence again, to silence and oblivion, like the harp thrown away in some garret to be covered with cobwebs and visited only by bats. "Is it not time," the old man thinks, "that the strings should be broken, the strings of the heart? Let the cold wind of death

now come and snap them." Yet, after all, why should he complain? Did he not have the beautiful experience of loving, and was she not in that time at least well worthy of the love that she called forth like music?

There are several other poems referring to what would seem to be the same experience, and all are beautiful, but one seems to me nobler than the rest, expressing as it does a generous resignation. It is called "Deteriora," a Latin word signifying lesser, inferior, or deteriorated things—not easy to translate. Nor would you find the poem easy to understand, referring as it does to conditions of society foreign to anything in Japanese experience. But some verses which I may quote you will like.

If fate and nature screen from me
  The sovran front I bowed before,
And set the glorious creature free,
  Whom I would clasp, detain, adore;
If I forego that strange delight,
Must all be lost? Not quite, not quite.

Die, little Love, without complaint,
  Whom Honour standeth by to shrive:
Assoilèd from all selfish taint,
  Die, Love, whom Friendship will survive.
Not heat nor folly gave thee birth;
And briefness doth but raise thy worth.

This is the same thought which Tennyson expressed in his famous lines,

'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all.*

But it is still more finely expressed to meet a particular personal mood. One must not think the world lost because a woman has been lost, he says, and such a love is not a thing for any man to be ashamed of, in spite of the fact that it has been disappointed. It was honourable, unselfish, not inspired by any passion or any folly, and the very

* *In Memoriam*, LXXXV, 3-4

brevity of the experience only serves to make it more precious. Observe the use of the words "shrive" and "assoiled." These refer to the old religious custom of confession; to "shrive" signifies to forgive, to free from sin, as a priest is supposed to do, and "assoiled" means "purified."

If this was a personal experience, it must have been an experience of advanced life. Elsewhere the story of a boyish love is told very prettily, under the title of "Two Fragments of Childhood." This is the first fragment:

When these locks were yellow as gold,
When past days were easily told,
Well I knew the voice of the sea,
Once he spake as a friend to me.
Thunder-roarings carelessly heard,
Once that poor little heart they stirred.
    Why, oh, why?
    Memory, Memory!
She that I wished to be with was by.

Sick was I in those misanthrope days
Of soft caresses, womanly ways;
Once that maid on the stairs I met,
Lip on brow she suddenly set.
Then flushed up my chivalrous blood
Like Swiss streams in a midsummer flood.
    Then, oh, then,
    Imogen, Imogen!
Hadst thou a lover, whose years were ten.

This is evidently the charming memory of a little sick boy sent to the seaside for his health, according to the English custom, and unhappy there, unable to play about like stronger children, and obliged to remain under the constant care of nurses and female relatives. But in the same house there is another family with a beautiful young daughter, probably sixteen or eighteen years old. The little boy wishes, wishes so much that the beautiful lady would speak to him and play with him, but he is shy, afraid to approach her—

only looks at her with great admiring loving eyes. But one day she meets him on the stairs, and stoops down and kisses him on the forehead. Then he is in Heaven. Afterwards no doubt she played with him, and they walked up and down by the shore of the sea together, and now, though an old man, whenever he hears the roar of the sea he remembers the beautiful lady who played with him and caressed him, when he was a little sick child. How much he loved her! But she was a woman, and he was only ten years old. The reference to "chivalrous blood" signifies just this, that at the moment when she kissed him he would have given his life for her, would have dared anything or done anything to show his devotion to her. No prettier memory of a child could be told.

We can learn a good deal about even the shyest of the poets through a close understanding of his poetry. From the foregoing we know that Cory must have been a sickly child; and from other poems referring to school life we cannot escape the supposition that he was not a strong lad. In one of his verses he speaks of being unable to join in the hearty play of his comrades; and in the poem which touches on the life of the mature man we find him acknowledging that he believed his life a failure—a failure through want of strength. I am going to quote this poem for other reasons. It is a beautiful address either to some favourite student or to a beloved son—it is impossible to decide which. But that does not matter. The title is "A New Year's Day."

Our planet runs through liquid space,
And sweeps us with her in the race;
And wrinkles gather on my face,
    And Hebé bloom on thine:
Our sun with his encircling spheres
Around the central sun careers;
And unto thee with mustering years
    Comes hope which I resign.

'Twere sweet for me to keep thee still
Reclining halfway up the hill;
But time will not obey the will,
And onward thou must climb:
'Twere sweet to pause on this descent,
To wait for thee and pitch my tent,
But march I must with shoulders bent,
Yet farther from my prime.

I shall not tread thy battle-field,
Nor see the blazon on thy shield;
Take thou the sword I could not wield,
And leave me, and forget.
Be fairer, braver, more admired;
So win what feeble hearts desired;
Then leave thine arms, when thou art tired,
To some one nobler yet.

How beautiful this is, and how profoundly sad!

I shall return to the personal poetry of Cory later on, but I want now to give you some examples of his Greek work. Perhaps the best of this is little more than a rendering of Greek into English; some of the work is pure translation. But it is the translation of a very great master, the perfect rendering of Greek feeling as well as of Greek thought. Here is an example of pure translation:

They told me, Heracleitus, they told me you were dead,
They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.
I wept, as I remember'd how often you and I
Had tir'd the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,
A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest,
Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales, awake;
For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.

What are "thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales"? They are the songs which the dear dead poet made, still sung in his native country, though his body was burned to ashes long ago—has been changed into a mere handful of grey

ashes, which, doubtless, have been placed in an urn, as is done with such ashes to-day in Japan. Death takes away all things from man, but not his poems, his songs, the beautiful thoughts which he puts into musical verse. These will always be heard like nightingales. The fourth line in the first stanza contains an idiom which may not be familiar to you. It means only that the two friends talked all day until the sun set in the west, and still talked on after that. Tennyson has used the same Greek thought in a verse of his poem, "A Dream of Fair Women," where Cleopatra says

"We drank the Lybian Sun to sleep."

The Greek author of the above poem was the great poet Callimachus, and the English translator does not think it necessary even to give the name, as he wrote only for folk well acquainted with the classics. He has another short translation which he accompanies with the original Greek text; it is very pretty, but of an entirely different kind, a kind that may remind you of some Japanese poems. It is only about a cicada and a peasant girl, and perhaps it is twenty-four or twenty-five hundred years old.

A dry cicale chirps to a lass making hay,
"Why creak'st thou, Tithonus?" quoth she. "I don't play;
It doubles my toil, your importunate lay,
I've earned a sweet pillow, lo! Hesper is nigh;
I clasp a good wisp, and in fragrance I lie;
But thou art unwearied, and empty, and dry."

How very human this little thing is—how actually it brings before us the figure of the girl, who must have become dust some time between two and three thousand years ago! She is working hard in the field, and the constant singing of the insect prompts her to make a comical protest. "Oh, Tithonus, what are you making that creaking noise for? You old dry thing, I have no time to play with you, or to idle in any way, but you do nothing but complain. Why don't you work, as I do? Soon I shall have leave to sleep, because

I have worked well. There is the evening star, and I shall have a good bed of hay, sweet-smelling fresh hay, to lie upon. How well I shall sleep! But you, you idle noisy thing, you do not deserve to sleep. You have done nothing to tire you. And you are empty, dry and thirsty. Serves you right!" Of course you recognize the allusion to the story of Tithonus, so beautifully told by Tennyson. The girl's jest has a double meaning. The word "importunate" has the signification of a wearisome repetition of a request, a constant asking, impossible to satisfy. Tithonus was supposed to complain because he was obliged to live although he wanted to die. That young girl does not want to die at all. And she says that the noise of the insect supposed to repeat the complaint of Tithonus, only makes it more tiresome for her to work. She was feeling, no doubt, much as a Japanese student would feel when troubled by the singing of *semi* on some very hot afternoon while he is trying to master some difficult problem.

That is pure Greek—pure as another mingling of the Greek feeling with the modern scholarly spirit, entitled "An Invocation." Before quoting from it I must explain somewhat; otherwise you might not be able to imagine what it means, because it was written to be read by those only who are acquainted with Theocritus and the Greek idyllists. Perhaps I had better say something too, about the word idyll, for the use of the word by Tennyson is not the Greek use at all, except in the mere fact that the word signifies a picturing, a shadowing or an imaging of things. Tennyson's pictures are of a purely imaginative kind in the "Idylls of the King." But the Greek poets who first invented the poetry called idyllic did not attempt the heroic works of imagination at all; they only endeavoured to make perfectly true pictures of the common life of peasants in the country. They wrote about the young men and young girls working on the farms, about the way they quarrelled or rejoiced or made love, about their dances and their songs, about their religious festivals and their sacrifices to the

gods at the parish temple. Imagine a Japanese scholar of to-day who, after leaving the university, instead of busying himself with the fashionable studies of the time, should go out into the remoter districts or islands of Japan, and devote his life to studying the existence of the commoner people there, and making poems about it. This was exactly what the Greek idyllists did,—that is, the best of them. They were great scholars and became friends of kings, but they wrote poetry chiefly about peasant life, and they gave all their genius to the work. The result was so beautiful that everybody is still charmed by the pictures or idylls which they made.

Well, after this digression, to return to the subject of Theocritus, the greatest of the idyllists. He has often introduced into his idylls the name of Comatas. Who was Comatas? Comatas was a Greek shepherd boy, or more strictly speaking a goatherd, who kept the flocks of a rich man. It was his duty to sacrifice to the gods none of his master's animals, without permission; but as his master was a very avaricious person, Comatas knew that it would be of little use to ask him. Now this Comatas was a very good singer of peasant songs, and he made many beautiful poems for the people to sing, and he believed that it was the gods who had given him power to make the songs, and the Muses had inspired him with the capacity to make good verse. In spite of his master's will, Comatas therefore thought it was not very bad to take the young kids and sacrifice to the gods and the Muses. When his master found out what had been done with the animals, naturally he became very angry, and he put Comatas into a great box of cedar-wood in order to starve him to death—saying, as he closed and locked the lid, "Now, Comatas, let us see whether the gods will feed you!" In that box Comatas was left for a year without food or drink, and when the master, at the end of the year, opened the box, he expected to find nothing but the bones of the goatherd. But Comatas was alive and well, singing sweet songs, because during the year

the Muses had sent bees to feed him with honey. The bees had been able to enter the box through a very little hole. I suppose you know that bees were held sacred to the Muses, and that there is in Greek legend a symbolic relation between bees and poetry.

If you want to know what kind of songs Comatas sang and what kind of life he represented, you will find all this exquisitely told by Theocritus; and there is a beautiful little translation in prose of Theocritus, Bion and Moschus, made by Andrew Lang, which should delight you to read. Another day I shall give you examples of such translations.* Then you will see what true idyllic poetry originally signified. These Greeks, although trained scholars and philosophers, understood not only that human nature in itself is a beautiful thing, but also that the best way to study human nature is to study the life of the peasants and the common people. It is not to the rich and leisurely, not to rank and society, that a poet must go for inspiration. He will not find it there. What is called society is a world in which nobody is happy, and in which pure human nature is afraid to show itself. Life among the higher classes in all countries is formal, artificial, theatrical; poetry is not there. Of course no kind of human community is perfectly happy, but it is among the simple folk, the country folk, who do not know much about evil and deceit, that the greater proportion of happiness can be found. Among the youths of the country especially, combining the charm of childhood with the strength of adult maturity, the best possible subjects for fine pure studies of human nature can be found. May I not here express the hope that some young Japanese poet, some graduate of this very university, will eventually attempt to do in Japan what Theocritus and Bion did in ancient Sicily? A great deal of the very same kind of poetry exists in our own rural districts, and parallels can be found in the daily life of the Japanese peasants for everything beautifully described in Theocritus. At all

*See *On Art, Literature and Philosophy*, Ch. XXXI "Old Greek Fragments."

events I am quite sure of one thing, that no great new literature can possibly arise in this country until some scholarly minds discover that the real force and truth and beauty and poetry of life is to be found only in studies of the common people—not in the life of the rich and the noble, not in the shadowy life of books.

Well, our English poet felt with the Greek idyllists, and in the poem called "An Invocation" he beautifully expresses this sympathy. All of us, he says, should like to see and hear something of the ancient past if it were possible. We should like, some of us, to call back the vanished gods and goddesses of the beautiful Greek world, or to talk to the great souls of that world who had the experience of life as men—to Socrates, for example, to Plato, to Phidias the sculptor, to Pericles the statesman. But, as a poet, my wish would not be for the return of the old gods nor of the old heroes so much as for the return to us of some common men who lived in the Greek world. It is Comatas, he says, that he would most like to see, and to see in some English park —in the neighbourhood of Cambridge University, or of Eton College. And thus he addresses the spirit of Comatas:

Oh, dear divine Comatas, I would that thou and I
Beneath this broken sunlight this leisure day might lie;
Where trees from distant forests, whose names were strange to thee,
Should bend their amorous branches within thy reach to be,
And flowers thine Hellas knew not, which art hath made more fair,
Should shed their shining petals upon thy fragrant hair.

Then thou shouldst calmly listen with ever-changing looks
To songs of younger minstrels and plots of modern books,
And wonder at the daring of poets later born,
Whose thoughts are unto thy thoughts as noon-tide is to morn;
And little shouldst thou grudge them their greater strength of soul,
Thy partners in the torch-race, though nearer to the goal.

. . . . . .

Or in thy cedarn prison thou waitest for the bee:
Ah, leave that simple honey, and take thy food from me.
My sun is stooping westward. Entrancèd dreamer, haste:

There's fruitage in my garden, that I would have thee taste.
Now lift the lid a moment: now, Dorian shepherd, speak:
Two minds shall flow together, the English and the Greek.

A few phrases of these beautiful stanzas need explanation. "Broken sunlight" refers, of course, to the imperfect shade thrown by the trees under which the poet is lying. The shadow is broken by the light passing through leaves, or conversely, the light is broken by the interposition of the leaves. The reference to trees from distant forests no doubt intimates that the poet is in some botanical garden, a private park, in which foreign trees are carefully cultivated. The "torch-race" is a simile for the pursuit of knowledge and truth. Greek thinkers compare the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another, to the passing of a lighted torch from hand to hand, as in the case of messengers carrying signals or athletes running a mighty race. As a runner runs until he is tired, or until he reaches the next station, and then passes the torch which he has been carrying to another runner waiting to receive it, so does each generation pass on its wisdom to the succeeding generation, and disappear. "My sun is stooping westward," is only a beautiful way of saying, "I am becoming very old; be quick, so that we may see each other before I die." And the poet suggests that it is because of his age and his experience and his wisdom that he could hope to be of service to the dear divine Comatas. The expression, "there is fruitage in my garden," refers to no material garden, but to the cultivated mind of the scholar; he is only saying, "I have strange knowledge that I should like to impart to you." How delightful, indeed, it would be, could some university scholar really converse with a living Greek of the old days!

There is another little Greek study of great and simple beauty entitled "The Daughter of Cleomenes." It is only an historical incident, but it is so related for the pleasure of suggesting a profound truth about the instinct of childhood. Long ago, when the Persians were about to make an attack upon the Greeks, there was an attempt to buy

off the Spartan resistance, and the messenger to the Spartan general found him playing with his little daughter, a child of six or seven. The conference was carried on in whispers, and the child could not hear what was being said; but she broke up the whole plot by a single word. I shall quote a few lines from the close of the poem, which contain its moral lessons. The emissary has tried to tempt him with promises of wealth and power.

He falters; for the waves he fears,
  The roads he cannot measure;
But rates full high the gleam of spears,
  And dreams of yellow treasure.
He listens; he is yielding now;
  Outspoke the fearless child:
"Oh, father, come away, lest thou
  Be by this man beguiled."
Her lowly judgment barred the plea,
  So low, it could not reach her.
The man knows more of land and sea,
  But she's the truer teacher.

All the little girl could know about the matter was instinctive; she only saw the cunning face of the stranger, and felt sure that he was trying to deceive her father for a bad purpose—so she cried out, "Father, come away with me, or else that man will deceive you." And she spoke truth, as her father immediately recognized.

There are several more classical studies of extraordinary beauty; but your interest in them would depend upon something more than interest in Greek and Roman history, and we cannot study all the poems. So I prefer to go back to the meditative lyrics, and to give a few splendid examples of these more personal compositions. The following stanzas are from a poem whose Latin title signifies that Love conquers death. In this poem the author becomes the equal of Tennyson as a master of language.

The plunging rocks, whose ravenous throats
  The sea in wrath and mockery fills,

The smoke that up the valley floats,
  The girlhood of the growing hills,

The thunderings from the miners' ledge,
  The wild assaults on nature's hoard,
The peak, that stormward bares an edge
  Ground sharp in days when Titans warred,

Grim heights, by wandering clouds embraced,
  Where lightning's ministers conspire,
Grey glens, with tarn and streamlet laced,
  Stark forgeries of primeval fire,

These scenes may gladden many a mind
  Awhile from homelier thoughts released,
And here my fellow-men may find
  A Sabbath and a vision-feast.

I bless them in the good they feel;
  And yet I bless them with a sigh:
On me this grandeur stamps the seal
  Of tyrranous mortality.

The pitiless mountain stands so sure,
  The human breast so weakly heaves,
That brains decay, while rocks endure,
  At this the insatiate spirit grieves.

But hither, oh, ideal bride!
  For whom this heart in silence aches,
Love is unwearied as the tide,
  Love is perennial as the lakes,

Come thou. The spiky crags will seem
  One harvest of one heavenly year,
And fear of death, like childish dream,
  Will pass and flee, when thou art here.

Very possibly this charming meditation was written on the Welsh coast; there is just such scenery as the poem describes, and the grand peak of Snowdon would well realize the imagination of the line about the girlhood of

the growing hills. The melancholy of the latter part of the composition is the same melancholy to be found in "Mimnermus in Church," the first of Cory's poems which we read together. It is the Greek teaching that there is nothing to console us for the great doubt and mystery of existence except unselfish affection. All through the book we find the same philosophy, even in the beautiful studies of student life and the memories of childhood. So it is quite a melancholy book, though the sadness be beautiful. I have given you examples of the sadness of doubt and of the sadness of love; but there is yet a third kind of sadness—the sadness of a childless man, wishing that he could have a child of his own. It is a very pretty thing, simply entitled "Scheveningen Avenue"—probably the name of the avenue where the incident occurred. The poet does not tell us how it occurred, but we can very well guess. He was riding in a street car, probably, and a little girl next to him, while sitting upon her nurse's lap, fell asleep, and as she slept let her head fall upon his shoulder. This is a very simple thing to make a poem about, but what a poem it is!

Oh, that the road were longer,
  A mile, or two, or three!
So might the thought grow stronger
  That flows from touch of thee.

Oh, little slumbering maid,
  If thou wert five years older,
Thine head would not be laid
  So simply on my shoulder!

Oh, would that I were younger,
  Oh, were I more like thee,
I should not faintly hunger
  For love that cannot be.

A girl might be caressed,
  Beside me freely sitting;
A child on me might rest,
  And not like thee, unwitting.

Such honour is thy mother's,
  Who smileth on thy sleep,
Or for the nurse who smothers
  Thy cheek in kisses deep.

And but for parting day,
  And but for forest shady,
From me they'd take away
  The burden of their lady.

Ah thus to feel thee leaning
  Above the nursemaid's hand,
Is like a stranger's gleaning,
  Where rich men own the land.

Chance gains, and humble thrift,
  With shyness much like thieving,
No notice with the gift,
  No thanks with the receiving.

Oh, peasant, when thou starvest
  Outside the fair domain,
Imagine there's a harvest
  In every treasured grain!

Make with thy thoughts high cheer,
  Say grace for others dining,
And keep thy pittance clear
  From poison of repining.

There is an almost intolerable acuity of sadness in the last two mocking verses, but how pretty and how tender the whole thing is, and how gentle-hearted must have been the man who wrote it! The same tenderness reappears in references to children of a larger growth, the boys of his school. Sometimes he very much regrets the necessity of discipline, and advocates a wiser method of dealing with the young. How very pretty is this little verse about the boy he loves.

Sweet eyes, that aim a level shaft
  At pleasure flying from afar,
Sweet lips, just parted for a draught

Of Hebe's nectar, shall I mar
By stress of disciplinal craft
The joys that in your freedom are?

But a little reflection further on in the same poem reminds us how necessary the discipline must be for the battle of life, inasmuch as each of those charming boys will have to fight against evil—

yet shall ye cope
With worldling wrapped in silken lies,
With pedant, hypocrite, and pope.

One might easily lecture about this little volume for many more days, so beautiful are the things which fill it. But enough has been cited to exemplify its unique value. If you reread these quotations, I think you will find each time new beauty in them. And the beauty is quite peculiar. Such poetry could have been written only under two conditions. The first is that the poet be a consummate scholar. The second is that he must have suffered as only a great mind and heart could suffer, from want of affection.

CHAPTER XXXI

PHILOSOPHICAL POEMS OF THE VICTORIAN AGE

I

BROWNING'S "RABBI BEN EZRA"

IN a certain sense every great poet is a great priest. While it is quite true that few of the greater poets of any country in Europe have been orthodox believers—strict member of any church or creed; while it is even true that most of them have been distinguished rather as free-thinkers than as believers—nevertheless it is equally true that all of them, or nearly all of them, have been men of deep faith. Their faith has been their own—they have recognized in their own free way the great mystery of the universe, the feebleness of human wisdom to read that mystery, the impermanency of most things, and the ethical necessities of ordered existence. Being men of peculiarly fine and delicate organization, they have also been for the most part sensitive to wrong, strenuous for right, and in a certain way better able to tolerate and to judge than the majority of lesser men. Life has oppressed them more heavily, perhaps, than any others; they have accordingly been almost forced to give more thought to the reasons of human sorrow and social inequality. Finally, by the very nature of their profession, they have had to live a great deal alone, under conditions compelling them to think and feel profoundly. Whoever thinks and feels profoundly about life and the riddles of life, almost necessarily becomes something of a religious teacher if he puts his best thoughts into print. And it is to men of this class that the world has learned to look for a certain kind of unconventional moral teaching and for con-

solation in unconventional philosophic thought. The world has recognized that the poet—the great poet—is a kind of priest; the term World Priest has well been given to several of the greatest.

Now there are two ways in which the great poet figures as a priest. One is by simply reflecting and teaching the best moral thought of his own country and time. The other and larger method is by teaching men to think in entirely new ways about whole-truth, and so teaching that the boundaries of religions, countries, races, all vanish in the consideration of expanded verities. The men who can teach in the latter way are, indeed, very few, but they are the true World Priests. The great German Goethe was a poet of this kind.

During the last period of English poetry there were very few philosophical poems of the very first rank produced, for the obvious reason that men's minds were at that time in an unsettled state. A new philosophy, a new theory of the universe, was being fiercely debated; old beliefs were weakening or vanishing, and between the past and the present many poets did not really know how to choose. Some few kept to the old order of things, two or three dared to speak new thoughts fearlessly, a majority remained wavering, half-way. At the present time the new thought seems to have conquered, but poetry has become silent. The new poets have not yet learned, perhaps, how to face the new riddles. But it is very interesting in this moment of hush, to look back to the Victorian period, and see what its great philosophical compositions expressed of the thought of the time. Four or five poems will teach us a great deal in regard to the psychological aspects of Victorian poetry.

No personality of this period is more interesting than that of Browning, and we should naturally expect even more from him than he has given us of philosophical poetry. Many and many a reader has studied Browning in vain for a clear explanation of what he thought about the problems of his time. Here and there we find a hint of the influence

of new ideas, but perhaps upon the very next page, or even upon the same page, we find some expressions of sympathy with vanishing beliefs. Books have been written about the philosophy of Browning, and I think that most of them are simply nonsense. The truth is that Browning never attempted to express any one kind or school of philosophy; what is more, he very seldom tried to express his own opinion at all. The whole of his method was opposed to such presentation. It was a psychological method; its purpose was not to put forth personal ideas, but to explain by sympathetic intuition the ideas and the beliefs of other great minds. To illustrate this fact better, let me speak in detail of Browning's method. He would read a book of history, philosophy, ethics, metaphysics—it matters little what—by some great man; then he would try to understand from that book the soul of the man who wrote it. He would say to himself, "A man who wrote like this, must have thought in such and such a way; I can understand him, and I can make him live again, make him speak as if he were alive." Then he would write about that man, and make him act according to his conception. It was in this way that Browning wrote philosophical poems. Naturally it was not the living men of his own time who could have furnished him with the material that he wanted; they were too near him, they had not yet completed their life-work. He turned naturally to the great minds of the past, and he cared nothing about when they lived, or where they lived, or what creed they belonged to; he did not even care whether they were right or wrong, provided that they had a great lesson to teach, which he could understand.

But although this was Browning's distinguishing dramatic method, he nevertheless sometimes becomes a poet-priest by virtue of that intense sympathy which he was able to feel and to express even for beliefs that were not his own. If you can understand another person's religion—the emotional germ of truth which is in it, the promptings which it gives to conscience, the consolations which it bestows on him in

the time of trouble; if you can understand all this and faithfully express it, you virtually preach the boon which is in that religion, whether you believe it or not. Browning could do this. He could also understand wickedness and express that.

By his poem "Rabbi Ben Ezra" Browning made his most notable contribution to the metaphysical poetry of the Victorian age. He took for his subject the character of a famous Spanish Jew, more generally known in literary history by his Arabian name Ben Ezra, who was born at Toledo early in the eleventh century. Having read the work of this man, Browning tried to express the character of him in the form of an imaginary discourse upon old age, the riddle of life, and the purpose of God—supposed to be spoken by this Jewish teacher of nine hundred years ago. The poem is partly religious, but that portion of it regarding the relation of old age to the life of man is philosophical in the best sense. Already this composition has become very famous, and nobody can be said to know much about Browning's poems who is not acquainted with it. We can study it without necessarily reading the whole of it—for it is rather long; but we shall take each of the gems which it contains, and dwell a little upon their lustre.

The first part of the poem relates to old age considered from a different standpoint from that in which Cicero viewed it in other times.

> Grow old along with me!
> The best is yet to be,
> The last of life, for which the first was made:
> Our times are in His hand
> Who saith, "A whole I planned,
> Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be afraid!"

A confession of Jewish faith at the outset need not make you doubt the broad interest of wider thoughts to come. And even here the introduction promises well, with its startling suggestion about the value of old age. Some Greek

writers indeed spoke of old age as a period of calm from troubles, but most of them expressed the dread of its coming, and the sadness of an old man's memory. Cicero has nothing to say about old age that can console a modern old man who reads it; for Cicero's proposed consolations for old age would require a good deal of money to procure. The idea that old age might really be better than youth did not occur very often to minds that lived in the period when the chief purpose of living was thought to be personal happiness. It required some sterner creed to insist upon an answer to this plain question, "Is the object of life really personal happiness?" Of course the creed of Ben Ezra declared the very contrary, but he was certainly one of the first to declare boldly that old age is better than youth simply because of its being the time of knowledge and understanding. That is the meaning of the line "The best is yet to be." All the experiences of youth and of middle age should be thought of as only a preparation for old age. The life of man should be considered as a complete circle, a God-planned whole, and old age is the best part of that whole, the jewel in the ring-circle. Quite true, it is the period preceding death, and the old man is obliged to think a good deal about death, but what has he to be afraid of? Let him trust the power that has made him, and fear nothing.

But Ben Ezra says, "Do not imagine that I wish to find fault with youth, and the follies of youth, and scepticism of youth." The young man seeks pleasures, tires of them, goes in search of them, then talks about what he thought was best. Or he is wildly ambitious—he wants to be not only as great as the great men that he sees or reads about, but greater and more famous than any. All this is only because of his innocence and ignorance; and for the same reason in those early years he does not think about serious things—he doubts the teachings of wisdom. But, says Ezra, "Doubt is a good thing in the mind of a young man when it comes in a natural way—when it comes as the necessary

result of limited knowledge." Indeed it is only the utterly ignorant, the hopelessly stupid, who never doubt—they are mere lumps of matter, "clods untroubled by a spark," as the poet recites. Doubt and folly have their reason for being; but the time comes with every sensible man when he must preceive that the true object of life is not enjoyment, not selfish pleasure. If it were, what difference could there be between a man and a beast? For the beast indeed seeks its own pleasure, and if man does the same, it were but right that he should end in the same way. And the time comes when he has to recognize that there is something much more for him to do in the world than cultivate his appetites.

The first part of the poem, then, may be summarized thus: Old age is the flower and crown of life, because it is the age of wisdom, and all other years of life are but a preparation for it. The faults of youth are not to be despised nor unreasonably regretted; we learn only through making mistakes. The greatest of such mistakes is the fancy that life is to be valued in terms of pleasure. That is an animal idea of life.

Here the student should remember that the poet is expressing the ideas of a Jew, not a man of the nineteenth century, not of a philosopher of to-day. The distinction between the animal and the man is too strongly made, and belongs to an age in which thinking life was denied to animals by the metaphysicians. To-day we know better. Animals think, animals reason, and animals have a simple morality of their own, a moral consciousness and a very strong sense of duty. Indeed, in any modern great work on psychology you will find something relating to the morality of animals.

But to continue from the point of the poem at which we stopped. It is a man's duty, the poet says, to consider pain not as a misfortune but as a blessing. He has told us that we learn by mistakes, and that is only another way of saying that we learn wisdom through pain. It is pain that

makes us wise, that makes us unselfish, that makes us good men.

> Then, welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
> Be our joys three-parts pain!
> Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
> Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!
>
> For thence,—a paradox
> Which comforts while it mocks,—
> Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
> What I aspired to be,
> And was not, comforts me:
> A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

We should welcome every rebuff, every blow, every mishap that interrupts our pleasure in this world, or, as the poet puts it symbolically, "turns the smoothness of the world rough" for us. We should welcome every shock of necessity that does not allow us to remain idle, to sit and amuse ourselves, but obliges us to make a strong effort in order to live. It is well for us that three parts of every pleasure must be pain (I believe that this is the accurate philosophical calculation of the true proportion of pain and pleasure in common life); if it were otherwise we could not make so much moral progress. We should think that the pain of effort is really cheap, we should learn without thinking about the cost, we should never be afraid to do the best we can, or be unwilling to pay the cost of effort in suffering. The truth is that everybody's life is more or less of a success to just the same degree that it is more or less of a failure! This seems like a paradox, but it is a truth, and we shall find it a very comforting truth when we understand the meaning of life and the meaning of law. It is not what a man is able to do that Heaven judges him by;

it is by what he wishes and tries to do; and if he tries to do the impossible in a good direction, he will not be judged by his failure, but by his purpose.

Nevertheless, we must not think contemptuously of the body and of the senses, and of the pleasures that the senses provide. For by these we can learn, and do learn. There is no ascetic spirit in Ezra; he would consider such a spirit folly.

> For pleasant is this flesh;
> Our soul in its rose-mesh
> Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest:
> Would we some prize might hold
> To match those manifold
> Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!
>
> Let us not always say
> "Spite of this flesh to-day
> I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
> As the bird wings and sings,
> Let us cry "All good things
> Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

Very pleasant, he says, is this natural life of the body, the life that inclines us to pleasure, to idleness, to mere delight. The body is like a rosy net which keeps the bird of the soul from flying to the heaven which it desires. Indeed, it may seem hard that we cannot get our reward for effort in the same way that the animal does. The animal that is most active, most swift, most strong, gets most pleasure out of existence. It is not that way in the case of man. We do not get pleasure in proportion to the moral effort which we make—nor need we expect it. We must be content to anticipate a higher form of reward when freed from the net of the body. But do not say for that reason that the body is a hindrance—do not struggle unreasonably against nature. If you are wise, you will find that the body can help the soul just as much as the soul can help

the body, which means "use your best faculties, and your senses in the wisest way; and your very senses will help you to become wise and good." From the moral point of view the foregoing reflection will pass criticism very well. But, as a matter of fact, and although there are exceptions to this rule, the man who struggles best in the world is very likely to obtain the best that it has to offer. The race is to the stronger. However, Ben Ezra is not speaking of worldly success.

The next few verses deal with the rewards of a good life in the time of old age. It is only when old, he tells us, that a man can fairly judge his own acts in the past—can really know whether he was right or wrong about many things. From the experience of the past we can learn to face the future. It is better that, as young men, we cannot know, for the experience which makes us know is better for us than any teaching of texts or lips.

> Youth ended, I shall try
> My gain or loss thereby;
> Be the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
> And I shall weigh the same,
> Give life its praise or blame:
> Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

Here the fire referred to is the fire of youth, of impulse, of passion, of unreflecting emotion. But when this fire has been burned out—that is to say, when the man has become old,—what is left of his mind is like gold that has been in the furnace, and has been separated from all dross. "Was I right to be angry that day? Was I right to yield on that other day?" Such questions as these cannot be justly answered in the moment that the young man first puts them to his conscience. But when he puts those questions again to himself in the time of his old age, he can answer them, perhaps only he—and God. The judgment of the world, as to a man's actions, must not be trusted. How should it be trusted? How can the world truly judge a man?

Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They, this thing, and I, that: whom shall my soul believe?

If we rely upon mere human evidence, as to our personal worth, indeed we shall never know what that worth is. For every man of action must have at least ten enemies, or antagonists, who affect to despise him or openly hate him. Ten men will unite their ten opinions against his one. They will say, "What you did was foolish, what you obtained was of no value, what you liked was altogether worthless." How are you to prove that you are right and those ten men are wrong? Can you prove that they are not so learned as you, so clear-seeing as you, so quickly perceiving as you? Very probably they are more learned, more intellectually keen, more perceiving—altogether, as human forces, much better men than you. Nevertheless you must not be afraid of this evidence, if your conscience declares you right. The whole world may condemn you, but if you are right you must not heed the condemnation; your conscience and God ought to be friends enough for you. Besides, it is not by what the man does that God will judge him, but by what he wanted to do. Here the poet compares man to a vessel of clay shaped by a potter. The potter is God himself; the clay-vessel is the cup or body of our life. From this point begins a series of very beautiful verses—those which have especially made the poem famous. The following deal with human purpose as distinguished from human action:

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,

Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

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

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

The world judges the man by his work, by the quantity of it, vulgarly; and the approbation of the world is really worth nothing at all. The worth of a man is in what the coarse judgment of the world cannot estimate—in what the coarse fingers of the world cannot span or measure—in what the man has never done, and could not do, but might have done if heaven had permitted. The best of a man may be in the thoughts that he could not express, in fancies that he never could utter by mere words, and therefore quickly forgot again. It may be exactly in the things that a man only wished to do, but could not do, that his real worth lies. In short, his worth may be only "potential," to use the philosophical term. Even from the scientific point of view there is a good deal of truth in this. The best qualities of a man may appear in his grandchildren or great grandchildren; they furnish the proof of the worth of the ancestor. But Ben Ezra refers only to the purpose of the infinite potter, who knows perfectly well the qualities and the possibilities of the clay which he is moulding.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

The metaphor of the potter and the wheel is taken from Isaiah, lxiv, 8. The poet makes the metaphor still finer by representing the whirl of time as the whirling of the wheel —the mighty wheel of Cosmos, upon which all forms are shaped. But though the form and the name may pass, the Substance and the Maker have neither beginning nor end; and whatever is real, has always been and will always be. I need scarcely tell you that this is rank heresy from the narrow standpoint of any orthodox Christian. This is not Western thinking at all, but Oriental thinking, with something of Platonism in it. It is not even Jewish in an orthodox sense. The idea that the soul of man will always be, is both Hebrew and Christian; but in the idea that it always has been, and that the mere fact of its existence would prove that it always had been, the teaching of Ben Ezra comes very near to the thinking of the Far East. As a matter of fact, Ben Ezra considered the soul very much as it is considered in the great Eastern religions, a compound; and only the best of a man, the absolutely pure qualities of self, he imagined to be eternal and immortal. The evil and the folly, the sensuous part of self, might crumble and die, but the elements of pure wisdom would continue for ever. And now observe how the metaphor of the potter and the vase is still further elaborated. The body

of a man and the common part of his mind is but a cup or vase, made by the Supreme Potter to be filled with that water of life which is pure wisdom and immortal. That is all. That is the truth which every man should try to recognize—that he is only like a cup, for the use of the Supreme. In the making of old Greek and Roman vases, it was occasionally the custom to decorate such vases with figures in relief. This was managed by moulding the cup in a particular way—and the fact suggests to the poet a still finer elaboration of the metaphor. About the bottom of the vase of life, representing youth, there are certain dancing figures, images of loves, cupids. But about the rim of the cup, the part last finished, the decoration consists of figures of skulls—grim things that suggest death and perhaps the decay of old illusions.

> What though the earlier grooves
> Which ran the laughing loves
> Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
> What though, about thy rim,
> Skull-things in order grim
> Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?
>
> Look not thou down but up!
> To uses of a cup,
> The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
> The new wine's foaming flow,
> The Master's lips aglow!
> Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with
> earth's wheel?

That is to say, "O man, thou who art but a cup made for the use of the Divine Maker, be not dismayed because the first part of the work is ended and done,—because that part of the cup which represented youth and beauty and the illusion of existence is finished,—nor because at this moment thou feelest that the Decorator is making upon you images of death, and not of life! Think only of the use of the cup; think only of the immortal banquet at which you

are to be filled for the use of the Master! The earth was indeed the wheel upon which you were shaped by the great Potter; but the work of the wheel being done, why regret it? Thou hast no more need of the wheel, no more need of the world. Thy destiny is the table of the eternal banquet."

> But I need, now as then,
> Thee, God, who mouldest men!
> And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
> Did I,—to the wheel of life,
> With shapes and colours rife,
> Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:
>
> So, take and use Thy work!
> Amend what flaws may lurk,
> What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
> My times be in Thy hand!
> Perfect the cup as planned!
> Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

The last verses embody the whole religious philosophy of the poem; and the last stanza may be regarded as a little prayer to the eternal Potter begging him to make perfect his work and to remove all the imperfections of the material. Every line is doubly suggestive. Now it is very curious to notice how the Persian poet Omar Khayyám, of whom I spoke to you, uses the very same comparison of the Potter and the clay for an entirely opposite teaching. The contrast of the ideas inspired by the same metaphor in two utterly different minds, is one of the most remarkable things in metaphysical poetry.

II

SWINBURNE'S "HERTHA"

THE really great work of the Victorian period in the metaphysical direction seems to be represented by four poets only, —Tennyson, Browning, Meredith, and Swinburne. Tennyson's work you know: it is chiefly to be found in the great elegiac

poem of "In Memoriam," the couplets of "The Two Voices," and in a number of shorter pieces, such as "Vastness." But Tennyson is rather a reflector, a mirror, of ideas of a class than an original voice. He never suffered himself to go very far out of the common track of thought followed by his own particular class, which always remained on the safe side of heterodoxy. What gives his utterances on the subject literary value is never their newness, but the extreme beauty of the language in which they are expressed. Browning is very much deeper, and we have read the best of his work in this direction, such as the musical poem of "Abt Vogler" and the religious poem of "Rabbi Ben Ezra." Swinburne we have not yet studied. It is rather surprising to find him in the rôle of philosopher; for it is as a poet of the senses that he is particularly noted. But the student ought to know that perhaps the very best poem which he has written—if it be possible, in view of such perfection, to call any one of his poems better than another—is a metaphysical poem, and one that will probably never disappear from the treasure house of English literature. It is entitled "Hertha."

Hertha was the name given by old northern races to the goddess or spirit of the earth. In other words, it is very much the same name as earth in a female personification. All of the great polytheistic religions had such a divinity; the old classical goddess, Ceres, mother of harvest, was a goddess of this kind. Now the ancient ideas regarding an earth divinity have never entirely passed away. They linger in literature with hundreds of idioms and phrases preserved from Greek and Latin sources. And when we talk to-day about nature's doing this, or producing that, desiring this, opposing that,—we are really speaking and thinking very much in old Roman and Greek ways. Observe also that we invariably speak in good literature of nature as "she." Nature remains still feminine in our poetry and our prose, and in our imagination, as in the imagination of a Roman in the days before Christianity.

Now in all these ancient conceptions of an earth goddess

there was a certain grain of truth. The mystery of life and of the world is not a bit clearer to the scientific mind of to-day than it was to the minds of the ancients. Indeed, all that science has done is to make plainer for us certain laws of nature, certain directions in which she moves, but of what nature is, science cannot tell us anything at all. Life is just as much a riddle as it ever was, and it will probably be a riddle as long as time endures. However, I think we may define nature scientifically as signifying forces which shape all things and dissolve all things—the powers of creation and the powers of disintegration. This makes nature at one with all that men have called God. Nature means for the scientist Force, for the scientific philosopher, the Unknown, and for the religious believer, God. If we unite the three conceptions in one, the result will be very much what Swinburne's Hertha is,—the spirit of all things, mothering all things, directing all things, containing all things. With this explanation, the beauty of the poem will be more manifest to our minds.

I am that which began;
Out of me the years roll;
Out of me God and man;
I am equal and whole;
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily; I am the soul.

Before ever land was,
Before ever the sea,
Or soft hair of the grass,
Or fair limbs of the tree,
Or the flesh-colour'd fruit of my branches, I was, and thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources
First drifted and swam;
Out of me are the forces
That save it or damn;
Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird; before God was, I am.

Beside or above me
  Naught is there to go;
Love or unlove me,
  Unknow me or know,
I am that which unloves me and loves; I am stricken, and I am the blow.

I the mark that is miss'd
  And the arrows that miss,
I the mouth that is kiss'd
  And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul and the body that is.

Before we examine the verses in detail it must be observed that, beautiful as they are, there at first sight appears to be an inappropriate use of imagery. Here is the spirit of the universe addressing us—yet comparing itself to a tree! You know that it is considered a kind of literary rule not to compare the great with the small, and here we have the infinite comparing itself with a tree! But really this use of imagery is very skilful; it is justified by the old northern mythology. In that mythology the source of all life was said to be the great ash tree Yggdrasil, whose roots were in the shadows of death, and whose head rose far above the highest heavens. Upon its lower branches the world was suspended, like a disc, and upon its middle branches were the heavens of the gods. That is the tree to which the poet refers, and you see that the image is a tremendous one. He could not have used it, perhaps, if he had not called his poem "Hertha"—but that title justifies the introduction of the tree of life. Now let us paraphrase.

"I am that which made all beginnings; and I created Time. God and men alike came from me; yet I am always infinitely ONE and infinitely complete. Human conceptions of God change with the years; human character changes; everything having bodily form changes. But I change never, because I am the soul of all things.

"Before there was any land or sea, any life, even of

grass, my life was; and the life that is now your life was even then contained within me (the image of 'flesh-colour'd fruit' used in the fifth line of this second stanza signifies the human race).

"On the sources of my being all life first appeared as upon the surface of the sea. I shape, but I unshape also; I preserve, but I likewise destroy. Human beings and animals and birds and all creatures are of me, and I was before any gods ever were.

"Neither is it possible to go outside of me—either above me or below me; for I am equally all depth and all height. Nor is it possible to have any knowledge or any feeling that is not of me. Hate me or love me; it is I who am the hater and the lover. Strike me; the blow is given by me, not by any other.

"I am the target which is shot at, and I am the arrows shot; and I am the lips of the girl that is kissed; yet I am also at the same time the life in the lover that kisses her. I am the seeker, and the act of seeking, and the thing sought for—the soul in everything, yet the body or form of everything as well."

The northern imagery in the early part of the verses is here suddenly exchanged for Oriental imagery. I need scarcely remind you that the fourth and the fifth stanzas are almost literal renderings of passages from the Sanskrit "Bhagavad-Gita,"—the greatest of all pantheistic poems ever written. Whether Swinburne actually took his inspiration from some translation of the Indian poem, or whether from some other source, I cannot say. But there is a very famous poem entitled "Brahma" translated from the Persian by Ritter, which would have given him the same inspiration; and the succession of images in the work of the Persian mystic happens to be very much the same as in Swinburne's poem. You can find the poem in the "Poems of Places," in the library, in the volumes relating to India. Very much like the Ritter translation in spirit, but less impressive as poetry, are Emerson's verses "Brahma." The Indian imag-

ination has appealed at once to thinkers of every class and in almost every country.

Swinburne has used a great many other images of recognizably Indian origin, but he has not by any means confined himself to this source. The inspiration of the following verses is Hebrew.

Hast thou known how I fashion'd thee,
  Child, underground?
Fire that impassion'd thee,
  Iron that bound,
Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart
  Thou hast seen with thine eyes
With what cunning of art
  Thou wast wrought in what wise,
By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and shown on my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
  Knowledge of me?
Has the wilderness told it thee?
  Hast thou learnt of the sea?
Hast thou communed in spirit with night? have the winds taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star
  To show light on thy brow
That thou sawest from afar
  What I show to thee now?
Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the mountains and thou?

Of course this irony is taken directly from "The Book of Job," the most sublime of all the poetical books of the Bible. And it does not lose in the borrowing—which is saying a great deal. Thus we have in the first part of the poem a very wonderful mingling of inspiration from three sublime sources—northern mythology, the "Bhagavad-Gita," and "The

Book of Job." Any man capable of uniting such widely different elements into one symmetrical whole could not fail to make a good poem; and this Swinburne has done. But, as we shall see, he has gone also to other sources for the material of "Hertha," including the best work of the great Greek poets.

The poet denies the work of the gods,—or rather the existence of any other gods than nature, making this nature speak in the name of Hertha, who is

Mother, not maker,
  Born, and not made;
Though her children forsake her,
  Allured or afraid,
Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs not for all that have pray'd.

A creed is a rod,
  And a crown is of night;
But this thing is God,
  To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,
  As my soul in thee saith;
Give thou as I gave thee,
  Thy life-blood and breath,
Green leaves of thy labour, white flowers of thy thought, and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving
  As mine were to thee;
The free life of thy living,
  Be the gift of it free;
Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt thou give thee to me.

O children of banishment,
  Souls overcast,
Were the lights ye see vanish meant
  Alway to last,

Ye would know not the sun overshining the shadows and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
The dim paths of the night
Set the shadow called God
In your skies to give light;
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadowless soul is in sight.

There is here a strange mixing together of old Greek and of modern ideas, of paganism and Christianity, of paganism and of individualism. The poet suggests, rather than declares, with modern science, that there is no creation—that what is, always was in essence. The universe came into being, but the substance of it has always been; its becoming was only a becoming of form. So, too, it was with man. Only as form was man born; the spirit within him has always been, and that spirit is one with the spirit of the universe.

The second stanza contains a few lines characteristic of Swinburne's radical views. "A creed is a rod," means that any religion is but a system of terror, a force of fear to rule human conduct. "A crown is of night," means that governments all represent an inferior and ignorant condition of society—that in a perfect society no government would be necessary. Then comes the assurance that man is god-like in proportion as he is able to cultivate his faculties; this is the gospel of individualism, reaching in fact to old Greek thought on the one hand, and touching Emerson on the other. Nature, says the poet, offers everything, and we in return should be generous in all things to nature. It is not right or necessary that we should worship her with fearful reverence; she does not want that. Neither is it necessary that we should consider her as a servant; if we do that, she will soon teach us our mistake. What she wants is our love, and we should give ourselves to her freely, out of love, for no other motive. As suggestions, there are great truths

here; but there are also positions taken to which it would not be possible to give any moral definition. Does Swinburne mean to say that the end of life is to live, in the highest sense of the word,—cultivating all our power and gratifying all our desires? If he does, his position is not at all satisfactory. As I suggested to you in a recent discourse, nature seems to be implacably opposed to individual selfishness; she sacrifices the individual without mercy for the sake of the species; and the tendency of the universe seems to be toward the creation of altruism, not toward the creation of egotism. I do not think that any great moral philosopher would be satisfied with Swinburne's position, if we interpret it in this way. But it is otherwise if we simply regard his poem as a beautiful song of the unity of life. So far as it expresses this grand truth, it is beautiful and worthy of all admiration. But we must not look upon it as a moral sermon. I have given you the cream of it, and you will find many other beauties if you desire to look for them. Only, no matter how much we may admire such verses as the following, we must remember that it would be quite impossible to shape any ethical belief out of them:

Thought made him and breaks him,
  Truth slays and forgives;
But to you, as time takes him,
  This new thing it gives,
Even love, the belovèd Republic, that feeds upon freedom and lives.

For truth only is living,
  Truth only is whole,
And the love of his giving
  Man's polestar and pole;
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed of my soul.

One birth of my bosom;
  One beam of mine eye;
One topmost blossom
  That scales the sky;
Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I.

This is a kind of assertion that, as belief in God passes away with time, the religion to be substituted for it will be the religion of human love: and this is Shelley's thought in another form. Scientifically, it has been said that the future tendency of human morals will certainly be toward such a consummation—there is no fault to be found with the hope; but the declaration that love is truth, is very much open to discussion. It requires qualifications of a very profound description before we can entertain it at all. There is here, to the ordinary mind, a confusion of words with things. Unless we accept only one possible moral suggestion, that a state of love, unselfish love, represents the best possible condition, and that the best of all possible conditions is likely to be the nearest to truth, we can get no satisfactory meaning out of it. As a poem, "Hertha" is beyond praise; as philosophy and morality it is unquestionably thin and disappointing. But let us see how a more powerful thinker has treated the same subject in poetry

III

MEREDITH'S "EARTH AND MAN"

LIKE Swinburne, Meredith preaches the unity of life, but he preaches it in a much vaster way, even beyond all time and space. Like Swinburne, he would probably regard all gods and all religions as perishable phenomena; but he can find truth and beauty and use in all beliefs, in spite of their ephemeral forms. And like Swinburne, he regards all past and present and future existence as linked together. But when he comes to speak of the meaning of life in relation to ourselves, he has very much more to say than Swinburne. He will not tell you that

> This thing is God,
> To be man with thy might.

Indeed, to any person making such utterances he would immediately put the Socratic question: "What is the mean-

ing of your phrase 'to be man with thy might'? Be so kind as to define the word 'man' and the word 'might,' so that I can understand what you are trying to say." Meredith is probably not so far from Swinburne's way of thinking as might appear; but he is at least much more definite, and leaves us no doubt at all about his opinion. For Meredith, nature is indeed a god, but a very terrible god, a very exacting god; and our duty to that divinity is plain enough. Life is duty; the character of that duty is effort; the direction of that effort should be self-cultivation; and the self-cultivation must be of the highest human faculties at the expense of the lower. That is to say that man must cultivate his mental and moral faculties, and subjugate all his senses to that end. All sensualism, all vice, all cruelty, all indolence, represent crime against the purposes of nature. So Meredith frankly preaches a nature-religion, and his religion is very terrible,—all the more terrible because we feel it to be perfectly true, because it is the religion of a thinking man of science, who is almost incapable of any sentimental weakness. Indeed, Meredith's moral poems are strangely awful; there is no word of pity in them, no syllable of mercy for human weakness of any sort. Nature is said to be unforgiving in the supreme degree, and Meredith is also unforgiving in the supreme degree. There is no tenderness in him,—none whatever. He is speaking for nature, speaking with her own voice, and he is teaching ethics according to the philosophy of Herbert Spencer. But he is not by any means so quietly dispassionate as Herbert Spencer; he is not content with an agnostic position in regard to the far-off tendency of things. He believes in the moral order of the universe, and it is quite enough for him that we can guess the immediate future without troubling ourselves in regard to infinite time. But we can best understand the quality of his teaching by turning to his poetry, and I shall quote herewith his introduction to "Earth and Man."

On her great venture, Man,
Earth gazes while her fingers dint the breast

Which is his well of strength, his home of rest,
And fair to scan.

More aid than that embrace,
That nourishment, she cannot give: his heart
Involves his fate; and she who urged the start
Abides the race.

For he is in the lists
Contentious with the elements, whose dower
First sprang him; for swift vultures to devour
If he desists.

His breath of instant thirst
Is warning of a creature matched with strife,
To meet it as a bride, or let fall life
On life's accursed.

. . . .

By hunger sharply sped
To grasp at weapons ere he learns their use,
In each new ring he bears a giant's thews,
An infant's head.

And ever that old task
Of reading what he is and whence he came,
Whither to go, finds wilder letters flame
Across her mask.

Earth is here compared to a living nurse, who presses her breasts in order to help her child-man suck the milk of life. Man is her "venture"—the word is here used in the sense of "doubtful undertaking." She has made man—that is, formed him, but she does not know whether her work will be successful as she wishes. Body she has given him, but the inner life of him, the ghost of him, that is beyond her power to make or unmake: she cannot help him in regard to his spiritual being. She is only the nurse, she can only give him nourishment; for all the rest he must help himself. She tells him to run, but she cannot help him win the race.

What is the race? The Race of Life,—the struggle for existence. Every being must take part in that race or perish. Man is in the "lists"—that is, on the race-course of life, and his competitors are very terrible; for they are no other than the elemental forces of nature. These forces gave him life, but they will also give him death if he lose the race. Let him stop running for one moment, and the vultures of death will descend upon him and destroy him.

The hunger of a new-born child,—the thirst of a babe for the mother milk,—is in itself a proof of the condition of man. Born hungry, he must struggle all his life for nourishment, and he must not be afraid of striving. The being that strives joyously, the creature that rejoices in effort even as a bridegroom rejoices at the prospect of greeting his bride,—only that creature can be successful. He who refuses to struggle is nature's accursed; let him perish! let the curtain of death hide him away for ever!

Now this hunger with which man came into existence obliged him to struggle before he had any weapons to help him in his contest. Doubtless his first weapons were of stone; and he must have attempted to use the weapons long before he was able either to make them well or to use them well. Follow his history back through the past, and you find him in primitive ages a giant in strength indeed, but only a baby in intelligence.

But becoming a little more intelligent, he begins to think about the secret of his existence. Where did he come from? Why is he in the world? Whither is he going? The secret of the Whence, the Why, and the Whither is completely hidden from the beginning. He tries to explain the mystery, and at every attempt to explain it, the more difficult it becomes. The line describing how man, at every such effort, "finds wilder letters flaming across the mask of nature," reminds us of the old story about the veil of the Egyptian goddess Isis, who also after a fashion represented the divine principle in nature. Before her statue there hangs a veil, and whoever attempts to lift it, finds another veil. And if

he tries to lift the second, behind it appears a third. If he tries to lift the third, behind it appears a fourth—and so on for ever. This old legend has furnished us with many excellent comparisons for the mystery of nature. Science is often compared to a man trying to lift the veil of Isis, and always finding behind each fold another fold. The word "mask" you must understand in the sense of disguise or illusion, and the expression about letters of fire hints at old legends about magical riddles. Nature presents man riddles to read. As soon as he reads one, another appears written in its place. If he cannot read, he must die; but if he reads, then a still harder task is put before him.

Now follows a description of how nature appeared to man. At first he worshipped her as a terrible divinity, and she showed him no more kindness on that account. Then he worshipped her as a beautiful and loving divinity; and she treated him no whit more kindly than before. Now again, because of his experience with her, she appears to him without pity and blind,—a monstrous force that cannot see or hear—"blind as fire."

> Seen of his dread, she is to his blank eye
> The eyeless Ghost.
>
> . . . .
>
> Once worshipped Prime of Powers,
> She still was the Implacable: as a beast,
> She struck him down and dragged him from the feast
> She crowned with flowers.
>
> Her pomp of glorious hues,
> Her revelries of ripeness, her kind smile,
> Her songs, her peeping faces, lure awhile
> With symbol-clues.
>
> . . . .
>
> He may entreat, aspire,
> He may despair, and she has never heed.
> She drinking his warm sweat will soothe his need,
> Not his desire.

She prompts him to rejoice,
Yet scares him on the threshold with the shroud.
He deems her cherishing of her best-endowed
A wanton's choice.

Albeit thereof he has found
Firm roadway between lustfulness and pain;
Has half transferred the battle to his brain,
From bloody ground;

He will not read her good,
Or wise, but with the passion Self obscures;
Through that old devil of the thousand lures,
Through that dense hood:

Through terror, through distrust;
The greed to touch, to view, to have, to live:
Through all that makes of him a sensitive
Abhorring dust.

Nature is at once frightful and inexplicable of character, simply because we cannot understand her moral teaching. Once learned, there is nothing unlovable in nature. Refuse to learn, and the result is pain, horror and death. Nature is like a divinity inviting us to a great banquet, where all the tables are made beautiful with lights and flowers, and she says "Come in, eat and drink and be merry—how good it is to eat and drink!" So men go and eat and drink at nature's table; but in the middle of the feast she seizes the guests, tears them in pieces, and devours them. At another time she tempts us with beauty and youth and lust, saying, "Behold these creatures, how fair they are! they were made to gratify these eyes; caress them!" And the tempted man yields to the caress—and nature again destroys him. What does all this mean? Is nature utterly wicked and cruel? No, she is not; she is teaching—that is all. And she will never tell you her lessons in advance—never! She will never tell you why you are hurt; you must find that out for yourself. She will give you power,—but never will she give you

what you ask for. She invites men to pleasure, and in the same moment terrifies them with death; therefore men refuse to understand, and imagine that nature is kind only to the wicked. What people sometimes imagine to be wicked, is not, however, at all wicked according to nature's laws. We see persons successful whom we know to be not moral in the common acceptance of the word. But these men must be nature's "best-endowed," otherwise they would not succeed. Then again what does all this mean?

The meaning is this: the real purpose of nature is to force man to develop himself until he reaches the divine condition. The first step in self-development is the conquest of the animal-self, the passions which man shares with inferior creatures. Now you will see the meaning of the poem more plainly. In order to make her selection, nature offers men the strongest temptation to the indulgence of these very passions. Those who yield to the temptations are destroyed from the face of the earth; those who resist the temptations, even for cunning and for selfish reasons, are spared. For these are the strong ones, in whom intelligence can master appetite. That is why we often find successful evil in this world. The evil people who greatly succeed are never altogether evil. They have at least learned to master their passions;—that is the first requisite for success. Once men have acquired the power to conquer the animal part of themselves, the second stage of development is possible, intelligent morality—morality not based on superstitious ideas, or traditional ideas, or self-seeking motives of any kind, but morality as inherent feeling, as natural law.

Do you observe the startling suggestion here? Does Meredith mean to say that the best human beings are not the most moral human beings in the religious sense of the word, but those who have acquired the most complete mastery over themselves? I am afraid that I must say very plainly that this is what he means. The idea may shock some of you. But all new ideas give a shock; and when we examine this one, we shall find that perhaps it is not so

very shocking. To be good only for religious reasons may often mean to be good only through fear. To be good only through fear is not to be really good. Nor can we praise justly the morality of a man who is moral only through fear of public opinion, or through fear of the law. There is only one other motive of goodness in the religious sense of the word,—a natural sense of kindness and justice and sympathy. Is that good? Certainly—but Meredith would tell you that it is good only in a limited degree, unless accompanied by intelligence and will. A sheep is a very gentle and sympathetic animal, a dove is a very good bird, but Meredith has told us very plainly in another of his poems that he prefers the lion and the eagle, both of which are creatures of prey, but higher works of nature. Perhaps this sounds very immoral. I do not think so. Meredith's position is that goodness and weakness combined are of less value than force and courage without any goodness at all. And I imagine that he is right, for this reason—the tendency of all weakness is to destruction and death, no matter how moral it may be. Force without pity, courage without sympathy, may seem to us very horrible,—even diabolical; but the tendency in these cases is to larger life and higher development, and these qualities of strength alone can form the firm foundation for future moral development. It is not enough to be good if you are weak: you must try to be both good and strong. But if humanity has to choose between being good and being strong, then it is better to be strong. The goodness will come later on. But it will never come to the weak. You must remember that Meredith classes the highest form of strength as intellectual strength. Strength of mind, capacity to govern one's passions independently of moral motives, is better than weakness of mind conjoined with the best of moral motives.

Now to return to the text. He tells us that man has up to this time only "half transferred the battle to his brain from bloody ground." This means that man is yet only half master of himself, only half intellectually developed.

Paraphrased, the expression would be about thus: So far man has only been able to transfer the real struggle for existence from the physical world of war to the mental world of war. His first battles were with his own kind or wild beasts; his new battle is with himself. It is much harder fighting. But he will never win that victory until he has learned to give up all other forms of struggle. By fighting with himself he will become stronger. At present it is very hard for him to understand this. He is still so selfish that he can see facts only through the medium of his own selfish desires. Therefore he is still comparatively blind. But he will eventually be able to overcome all his selfishness; and then he will see clearly and will understand the mysteries that now trouble him. Then he will understand nature and the divine law, and read all those riddles quite easily which at present cause him so much sorrow and pain.

> But that the senses still
> Usurp the station of their issue mind,
> He would have burst the chrysalis of the blind:
> As yet he will;
>
> As yet he will, she prays,
> Yet will when his distempered devil of Self;—
> The glutton for her fruits, the wily elf
> In shifting rays;—

When this Self, described in several verses more, shall become completely purified, the poet suggests—but when will that be? Meredith very plainly says, as Spencer would also say if he could agree with Meredith's metaphysics, never in this world. Never in this world will man become altogether good and strong, never perfect. But that is only because this world will not last long enough. It will be in a future universe that man will become perfect—

> When fire has passed him vapour to the sun,
> And sun relumed.

After this system shall have returned to its parent sun,

planet by planet, and all have been burned, then after the death of that sun himself there will be another sun and other worlds and other moons. I suppose you know that this is mathematically certain. There is no doubt at all as to the astronomical history of the present universe, as to the certainty of its dissolution; neither is there any doubt that by reason of the recognized laws of matter and force another universe will be evolved out of the very same substance. We know the history of matter. But the question of the continuance of human tendencies, moral tendencies, after the destruction of the universe, can only be discussed by persons having a certain amount of faith. The great mathematicians would probably remain silent on this subject. Meredith has the faith required for the grand hypothesis. He considers that mind goes through the same form of cosmic evolution as matter,—that, indeed, the two are inseparable (there he accords with Spencer); and that all the tendencies and impulses of the present existence will have their results in another existence. Mankind can complete only a part of its evolution upon this planet; the rest will be accomplished upon other planets, and throughout all time, till man becomes divine.

So you see that Meredith is a very strong believer in the moral order of the universe, and that his attempt to apply the philosophy of evolution to ethics is well worthy of study. But I must warn you that unless you understand his moral position very clearly, you might easily misjudge him, especially in regard to this insistence upon the union of strength with goodness. Persons who worship only force might easily twist some of his teachings into a false direction. I imagine that the true direction of his thinking is not far from that of a great Arabic teacher, who, when asked by one of his pupils to define what was right and what was wrong in a few words, boldly answered,—"Do as you please in this world—only be careful that nothing which you do can cause any pain or any injury to your fellow man." Deeply considered, this is the essence of all religious

teachings; and the ideal humanity of Meredith's hope would probably have no fault to find with it.

CHAPTER XXXII

NOTE UPON THE POETRY OF JAMES THOMSON, "B. V."

THE other day when speaking to you of the fourth group of Victorian minor poets, I said something to you about the life of the author of "The City of Dreadful Night"—so it will not be necessary to repeat any facts about him here. He deserves some notice apart. His faults are so very great that five-sixths of his poetry should not be mentioned at all,—never should have been printed. And I hope that none of you will try to read them. But in "The City of Dreadful Night" and one or two other pieces that I told you about the matter is quite different. Any person with imagination can derive not only certain pleasure—especially the pleasure of fear—from reading it, but also a certain amount of poetical profit.

A word first about the general subject of this vague and monstrous poem. It is the picture of a vast city on which the sun never shone,—a city situated by the shore of the sea on which no ships ever sailed, and surrounded on the land side by spaces of black desert over which no foot could pass. Of course this is allegory. The city represents human life as Thomson saw it in his gloomy hours—without faith, without love, and without hope,—life, not as a blessing, but as a curse, as a nightmare. The allegory is not very distinct, not easily outlined, but the terror of the composition gains from this very want of definition, just as terrible objects seen in the dusk appear more terrible than if seen in the light. It is possible that the fancy was suggested to Thomson by the line from Dante which he puts at the beginning of the poem. Dante spoke of Hell as the dolorous city.

Thomson conceived of modern life as a hell; and Dante helped him to outline his terrible imagination in this allegorical poem.

There is no beginning in this poem, there is no end to it, there is no middle. It is only a succession of awful pictures—glimpses of the Inferno, but some of these glimpses will never fade from the memory of the reader. They have their value for the poet or the story-teller who understands the use of horror and awfulness in literary art. They have the same kind of value as the dreadful stories of Edgar Allan Poe. And just as it happened that the most terrible of Poe's stories and studies are those in which his prose reaches its greatest strength and its finest rhythmical effect—so in these glimpses Thomson's poetry has a force and a sinister beauty not exactly like anything else in literature. Even the metre in the bulk of the poem has a form of its own: the effect of doubling certain rhymes is that of a tolling or booming, as of death bells. Whether you would like, would find pleasure in all these pictures I am by no means sure; but some of them could scarcely fail to appeal to you. I am going to give you what I think to be the most original and terrible part of the poem,—beginning with the words "As I came through the desert."

This part of the poem is the story of a man who reached the City of Dreadful Night by passing through the black desert surrounding it, and reaching at last the shore of that tremendous sea upon which no ships can ever sail. The traveller probably represents the poet himself,—the state of a despairing mind. I suppose this,—because the vision of the woman on the seashore seems to refer to an episode of Thomson's youth. As he passes through the desert to reach the city, all kinds of horrors gather about him,—nightmare, demons, monsters. But a man who has lost all hope cannot have any fear; and his fearlessness of despair saves him from the spectres and the wild beasts and all the dangers of the desert. At last he reaches the awful sea;

Enormous cliffs arose on either hand,

enormous waves were rolling in over a beach of leagues in width: for a moment on that vast beach he beheld the sun through a break in the cloud; but it was a burnt-out sun, all burned out except the edges of the disk,

> A bleeding eyeless socket, red and dim.
>
> . . . . .
>
> As I came through the desert thus it was,
> As I came through the desert: From the right
> A shape came slowly with a ruddy light;
> A woman with a red lamp in her hand,
> Bareheaded and barefooted on that strand;
> O desolation moving with such grace!
> O anguish with such beauty in thy face!
> I fell as on my bier,
> Hope travailed with such fear.

Then, at sight of that phantom woman, a strange thing happened. The man becomes two men—divides as it were into two selves,—as if one self had been forcibly drawn out of the other by the attraction of the advancing shape. And this inner self drawn away from the other, falls prostrate upon the sand, at the feet of the figure.

> As I came through the desert thus it was,
> As I came through the desert: I was twain,
> Two selves distinct that cannot join again;
> One stood apart and knew but could not stir,
> And watched the other stark in swoon and her;
> And she came on, and never turned aside,
> Between such sun and moon and roaring tide:
> And as she came more near
> My soul grew mad with fear.

So hopelessness itself is conquered at last,—a new fear reveals itself that no despair is proof against. As a nightmare this is certainly one of the strangest ever experienced by an English dreamer: but this is only the beginning.

> As I came through the desert thus it was,
> As I came through the desert: Hell is mild
> And piteous matched with that accursèd wild;

A large black sign was on her breast that bowed,
A broad black band ran down her snow-white shroud;
That lamp she held was her own burning heart,
Whose blood-drops trickled step by step apart:
The mystery was clear;
Mad rage had swallowed fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: By the sea
She knelt and bent above that senseless me;
Those lamp-drops fell upon my white brow there,
She tried to cleanse them with her tears and hair;
She murmured words of pity, love, and woe,
She heeded not the river rushing flow:
And mad with rage and fear,
I stood stonebound so near.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: When the tide
Swept up to her there kneeling by my side,
She clasped that corpse-like me, and they were borne
Away, and this vile me was left forlorn;
I know the whole sea cannot quench that heart,
Or cleanse that brow, or wash those two apart:
They love; their doom is drear,
Yet they nor hope nor fear;
But I,—what do I here?

I cannot undertake to explain very literally what this means: I am not even at all sure that the meaning is of much consequence. It seems to me that this division of the man's self represents, allegorically, the difference of the guileless youth and the hardened and vicious man. The younger self was good—could be loved by a good woman; but it became befouled and distorted by long association with the later and more vicious self. When the apparition of the woman comes the older self cannot approach her; but the other is drawn to her, to be comforted perhaps. The conclusion of the vision does not quite bear out my interpretation, but I state only what the fancy suggests, and

I cannot undertake to define it further. Yet as I said before, the exact meaning of such fancies need not concern us any more than the fancies of "The Arabian Nights." The relation of such dreams to literature is not dependent upon any profound meaning, but upon the art with which the picture is drawn and the emotion communicated—whether it be the emotion of fear, despair, horror, or the emotion of joy, merriment, delight, really need not make any difference. You must try to think of Thomson as you think of a great painter of dreadful pictures. Just as the Japanese painter Ôkyo became celebrated, and remains celebrated as a great painter of ghosts and goblins, so I think that in Victorian poetry Thomson may be considered worthy of fame as a sort of English Ôkyo.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A NOTE ON ROBERT BUCHANAN

AMONG the minor poets of the Victorian period, Robert Buchanan cannot be passed over unnoticed. A contemporary of all the great singers, he seems to have been always a little isolated; I mean that he formed no strong literary friendships within the great circle. Most great poets must live to a certain extent in solitude; the man who can at once mix freely in society and find time for the production of masterpieces is a rare phenomenon. George Meredith is said to be such a person. But Tennyson, Rossetti, Swinburne, Browning, Fitzgerald, were all very reserved and retired men, though they had little circles of their own, and a certain common sympathy. The case of Buchanan is different. His aloofness from the rest has been, not the result of any literary desire for quiet, but the result, on the contrary, of a strong spirit of opposition. Not only did he have no real sympathy with the great poets, but he represented in himself the very prejudices against which they had to contend. Hard-headed Scotchman as he was, he manifested in his attitude to his brother poets a good deal of the peculiar, harsh conservatism of which Scotchmen seemed to be particularly capable. And he did himself immense injury in his younger days by an anonymous attack upon the morals, or rather upon the moral tone, of such poets as Rossetti and Swinburne. Swinburne's reply to this attack was terrible and withering. That of Rossetti was very mild and gentle, but so effective that English literary circles almost unanimously condemned Buchanan, and attributed his attack to mere jealousy. I think the attack was less due to jealousy than to character, to prejudice, to the

harshness of a mind insensible to particular forms of beauty. And for more than twenty years Buchanan has suffered extremely from the results of his own action. Thousands of people have ignored him and his books simply because it was remembered that he gave wanton pain to Rossetti, a poet much too sensitive to endure unjust criticism. I suppose that for many years to come Buchanan will still be remembered in this light, notwithstanding that he tried at a later day to make honourable amends to the memory of Rossetti, by dedicating to him, with a beautiful sonnet of apology, the definitive edition of his own works.

But the time has now passed when Buchanan can be treated as an indifferent figure in English literature. In spite of all disadvantages he has been a successful poet, a successful novelist, and a very considerable influence in the literature of criticism. Besides, he has written at least one poem that will probably live as long as the English language, and he has an originality quite apart and quite extraordinary, though weaker than the originality of the greater singers of his time. As to his personal history, little need to be said. He was educated at Glasgow University, and his literary efforts have always been somewhat coloured by Scotch sentiment, in spite of his long life in literary London.

Three volumes represent his poetical production. In these are contained a remarkable variety of poems—narrative, mystical, fantastic, classical, romantic, ranging from the simplest form of ballad to the complex form of the sonnet and the ode. The narrative poems would, I think, interest you least; they are gloomy studies of human suffering, physical and moral, among the poor, and are not so good as the work of Crabbe in the same direction. The mystical poems, on the contrary, are of a very curious kind; for Buchanan actually made a religious philosophy of his own, and put it into the form of verse. It is a Christian mysticism, an extremely liberal Unitarianism forming the basis of it; but the author's notions about the perpetual

order of things are all his own. He has, moreover, put these queer fancies into a form of verse imitating the ancient Celtic poetry. We shall afterward briefly consider the mystical poetry. But the great production of Buchanan is a simple ballad, which you find very properly placed at the beginning of his collected poems. This is a beautiful and extraordinary thing, quite in accordance with the poet's peculiar views of Christianity. It is called "The Ballad of Judas Iscariot." If you know only this composition, you will know all that it is absolutely necessary to know of Robert Buchanan. It is by this poem that his place is marked in nineteenth century literature.

Before we turn to the poem itself, I must explain to you something of the legend of Judas Iscariot. You know, of course, that Judas was the disciple of Christ who betrayed his master. He betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver, according to the tradition; and he betrayed him with a kiss, for he said to the soldiers whom he was guiding, "The man whom I shall kiss is the man you want." So Judas went up to Christ, and kissed his face; and then the soldiers seized Christ. From this has come the proverbial phrase common to so many Western languages, a "Judas-kiss." Afterwards Judas, being seized with remorse, is said to have hanged himself; and there the Scriptural story ends. But in Church legends the fate of Judas continues to be discussed in the Middle Ages. As he was the betrayer of a person whom the Church considered to be God, it was deemed that he was necessarily the greatest of all traitors; and as he had indirectly helped to bring about the death of God, he was condemned as the greatest of all murderers. It was said that in hell the very lowest place was given to Judas, and that his tortures exceeded all other tortures. But once every year, it was said, Judas could leave hell, and go out to cool himself upon the ice of the Northern seas. That is the legend of the Middle Ages.

Now Robert Buchanan perceived that the Church legends of the punishment of Judas might be strongly questioned

from a moral point of view. Revenge is indeed in the spirit of the Old Testament; but revenge is not exactly in the spirit of the teaching of Christ. The true question as to the fate of Judas ought to be answered by supposing what Christ himself would have wished in the matter. Would Christ have wished to see his betrayer burning for ever in the fires of hell? Or would he have shown to him some of that spirit manifested in his teachings, "Do good unto them that hate you; forgive your enemies"? As a result of thinking about the matter, Buchanan produced his ballad. All that could be said against it from a religious point of view is that the spirit of it is even more Christian than Christianity itself. From the poetical point of view we must acknowledge it to be one of the grandest ballads produced in the whole period of Victorian literature. You will not find so exquisite a finish here as in some of the ballads of Rossetti; but you will find a weirdness and a beauty and an emotional power that make up for slenderness in workmanship.

In order to understand the beginning of the ballad clearly, you should know the particulars about another superstition concerning Judas. It is said that all the elements refused to suffer the body to be committed to them; fire would not burn it; water would not let it sink to rest; every time it was buried, the earth would spew it out again. Man could not bury that body, so the ghosts endeavoured to get rid of it. The Field of Blood referred to in the ballad is the Aceldama of Scriptural legend, the place where Judas hanged himself.

'Twas the body of Judas Iscariot
  Lay in the Field of Blood;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Beside the body stood.

Black was the earth by night,
  And black was the sky;
Black, black were the broken clouds,
  Tho' the red Moon went by.

. . . .

Then the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Did make a gentle moan—
'I will bury underneath the ground
  My flesh and blood and bone.

. . . .

'The stones of the field are sharp as steel,
  And hard and cold, God wot;
And I must bear my body hence
  Until I find a spot!'

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot,
  So grim, and gaunt, and gray,
Raised the body of Judas Iscariot,
  And carried it away.

And as he bare it from the field
  Its touch was cold as ice,
And the ivory teeth within the jaw
  Rattled aloud, like dice.

The use of the word "ivory" here has a double function; dice are usually made of ivory; and the suggestion of whiteness heightens the weird effect.

As the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Carried its load with pain,
The Eye of Heaven, like a lanthorn's eye,
  Open'd and shut again.

Half he walk'd, and half he seemed
  Lifted on the cold wind;
He did not turn, for chilly hands
  Were pushing from behind.

The first place that he came unto
  It was the open wold,
And underneath were pricky whins,
  And a wind that blew so cold.

The next place that he came unto
  It was a stagnant pool,

And when he threw the body in
  It floated light as wool.

He drew the body on his back,
  And it was dripping chill,
And the next place he came unto
  Was a Cross upon a hill.

A Cross upon the windy hill,
  And a cross on either side,
Three skeletons that swing thereon,
  Who had been crucified.

And on the middle cross-bar sat
  A white Dove slumbering;
Dim it sat in the dim light,
  With its head beneath its wing.

And underneath the middle Cross
  A grave yawn'd wide and vast,
But the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Shiver'd, and glided past.

We are not told what this hill was, but every reader knows that Calvary is meant, and the skeletons upon the crosses are those of Christ and the two thieves crucified with him. The ghostly hand had pushed Judas to the place of all places where he would have wished not to go. We need not mind the traditional discrepancy suggested by the three skeletons; as a matter of fact, the bodies of malefactors were not commonly left upon the crosses long enough to become skeletons, and of course the legend is that Christ's body was on the cross only for a short time. But we may suppose that the whole description is of a phantasm, purposely shaped to stir the remorse of Judas. The white dove sleeping upon the middle cross suggests the soul of Christ, and the great grave made below might have been prepared out of mercy for the body of Judas. If the dove had awoke and spoken to him, would it not have said,

"You can put your body here, in my grave; nobody will torment you"? But the soul of Judas cannot even think of daring to approach the place of the crucification.

The fourth place that he came unto
  It was the Brig of Dread,
And the great torrents rushing down
  Were deep, and swift, and red.

He dared not fling the body in
  For fear of faces dim,
And arms were waved in the wild water
  To thrust it back to him.

There is here a poetical effect borrowed from sources having nothing to do with the Judas tradition. In old Northern folklore there is the legend of the River of Blood, in which all the blood ever shed in this world continues to flow; and there is a reference to this river in the old Scotch ballad of "Thomas the Rhymer."

It was mirk, mirk night, and there was nae starlight,
  They waded through red blude up to the knee;
For a' the blude that's shed on earth
  Rins through the springs o' that countrie.

Judas leaves the dreadful bridge and continues his wanderings over the mountain, through woods and through great desolate plains:

For months and years, in grief and tears,
  He walked the silent night;
Then the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Perceived a far-off light.

A far-off light across the waste,
  As dim as dim might be,
That came and went like the lighthouse gleam
  On a black night at sea.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Crawl'd to the distant gleam;
And the rain came down, and the rain was blown
  Against him with a scream.

. . . . .

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot,
  Strange, and sad, and tall,
Stood all alone at dead of night
  Before a lighted hall.

And the wold was white with snow,
  And his foot-marks black and damp,
And the ghost of the silver Moon arose,
  Holding her yellow lamp.

And the icicles were on the eaves,
  And the walls were deep with white,
And the shadows of the guests within
  Pass'd on the window light.

The shadows of the wedding guests
  Did strangely come and go,
And the body of Judas Iscariot
  Lay stretch'd along the snow.

But only the body. The soul which has carried it does not lie down, but runs round and round the lighted hall, where the wedding guests are assembled. What wedding? What guests? This is the mystical banquet told of in the parable of the New Testament; the bridegroom is Christ himself; the guests are the twelve disciples, or rather, the eleven, Judas himself having been once the twelfth. And the guests see the soul of Judas looking in at the window.

'Twas the Bridegroom sat at the table-head,
  And the lights burnt bright and clear—
'Oh, who is that,' the Bridegroom said,
  'Whose weary feet I hear?'

'Twas one look'd from the lighted hall,
  And answered soft and slow,

'It is a wolf runs up and down
  With a black track in the snow.'

The Bridegroom in his robe of white
  Sat at the table-head—
'Oh, who is that who moans without?'
  The blessed Bridegroom said.

'Twas one looked from the lighted hall,
  And answered fierce and low,
''Tis the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Gliding to and fro.'

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Did hush itself and stand,
And saw the Bridegroom at the door
  With a light in his hand.

The Bridegroom stood in the open door,
  And he was clad in white,
And far within the Lord's Supper
  Was spread so broad and bright.

The Bridegroom shaded his eyes and look'd,
  And his face was bright to see—
'What dost thou here at the Lord's Supper
  With thy body's sins?' said he.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Stood black, and sad, and bare—
'I have wandered many nights and days;
  There is no light elsewhere.'

'Twas the wedding guests cried out within,
  And their eyes were fierce and bright—
'Scourge the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Away into the night!'

The Bridegroom stood in the open door,
  And he waved hands still and slow,
And the third time that he waved his hands
  The air was thick with snow.

And of every flake of falling snow,
  Before it touched the ground,
There came a dove, and a thousand doves
  Made sweet sound.

'Twas the body of Judas Iscariot
  Floated away full fleet,
And the wings of the doves that bare it off
  Were like its winding-sheet.

'Twas the Bridegroom stood at the open door,
  And beckon'd, smiling sweet;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
  Stole in, and fell at his feet.

'The Holy Supper is spread within,
  And the many candles shine,
And I have waited long for thee
  Before I poured the wine!'

It would have been better, I think, to finish the ballad at this stanza; there is one more, but it does not add at all to the effect of what goes before. When the doves, emblems of divine love, have carried away the sinful body, and the Master comes to the soul, smiling and saying: "I have been waiting for you a long time, waiting for your coming before I poured the wine"—there is nothing more to be said. We do not want to hear any more; we know that the Eleven had again become Twelve; we do not require to be told that the wine is poured out, or that Judas repents his fault. The startling and beautiful thing is the loving call and the welcome to the Divine Supper. You will find the whole of this poem in the "Victorian Anthology," but I should advise any person who might think of making a Japanese translation to drop the final stanza and to leave out a few of the others, if his judgment agrees with mine.

Read this again to yourselves, and see how beautiful it is. The beauty is chiefly in the central idea of forgiveness; but the workmanship of this composition has also a very re-

markable beauty, a Celtic beauty of weirdness, such as we seldom find in a modern composition touching religious tradition. It were interesting to know how the poet was able to imagine such a piece of work. I think I can tell a little of the secret. Only a man with a great knowledge and love of old ballads could have written it. Having once decided upon the skeleton of the story, he must have gone to his old Celtic literature and to old Northern ballads for further inspiration. I have already suggested that the ballad of "Thomas the Rhymer" was one source of his inspiration, with its strange story of the River of Blood. Thomas was sitting under a tree, the legend goes, when he saw a woman approaching so beautiful that he thought she was an angel or the Virgin Mary, and he addressed her on his knees. But she sat down beside him, and said, "I am no angel nor saint; I am only a fairy. But if you think that I am so beautiful, take care that you do not kiss me, for if you do, then I shall have power over you." Thomas immediately did much more than kiss her, and he therefore became her slave. She took him at once to fairyland, and on their way they passed through strange wild countries, much like those described in Robert Buchanan's ballad; they passed the River of Blood; they passed dark trees laden with magical food; and they saw the road that reaches Heaven and the road that reaches Hell. But Buchanan could take only a few ideas from this poem. Other ideas, I think were inspired by a ballad of Goethe's, or at least by Sir Walter Scott's version of it, "Frederick and Alice." Frederick is a handsome young soldier who seduces a girl called Alice under promise of marriage, and then leaves her. He rides to join the army in France. The girl becomes insane with grief and shame; and the second day later she dies at four o'clock in the morning. Meantime Frederick unexpectedly loses his way; the rest I may best tell in the original weird form. The horse has been frightened by the sound of a church bell striking the hour of four.

Heard ye not the boding sound,
  As the tongue of yonder tower,
Slowly, to the hills around,
  Told the fourth, the fated hour?

Starts the steed, and snuffs the air,
  Yet no cause of dread appears;
Bristles high the rider's hair,
  Struck with strange mysterious fears.

Desperate, as his terrors rise,
  In the steed the spur he hides;
From himself in vain he flies;
  Anxious, restless, on he rides.

Seven long days, and seven long nights,
  Wild he wander'd, woe the while!
Ceaseless care and causeless fright
  Urge his footsteps many a mile.

Dark the seventh sad night descends;
  Rivers swell, and rain-streams pour;
While the deafening thunder lends
  All the terrors of its roar.

At the worst part of his dreary wandering over an unknown and gloomy country, Frederick suddenly sees a light far away. This seems to him, as it seemed in Buchanan's ballad to the soul of Judas, a light of hope. He goes to the light, and finds himself in front of a vast and ruinous-looking church. Inside there is a light; he leaps down from his horse, descends some steps, and enters the building. Suddenly all is darkness again; he has to feel his way.

Long drear vaults before him lie!
  Glimmering lights are seen to glide!—
'Blessèd Mary, hear my cry!
  Deign a sinner's steps to guide!'—

Often lost their quivering beam,
  Still the lights move slow before,
Till they rest their ghastly gleam
  Right against an iron door.

He is really in the underground burial place of a church, in the vaults of the dead, but he does not know it. He hears voices.

Thundering voices from within,
  Mixed with peals of laughter, rose;
As they fell, a solemn strain
  Lent its wild and wondrous close!

'Midst the din, he seem'd to hear
  Voice of friends, by death removed;—
Well he knew that solemn air,
  'Twas the lay that Alice loved.

Suddenly a great bell booms four times, and the iron door opens. He sees within a strange banquet; the seats are coffins, the tables are draped with black, and the dead are the guests.

Alice, in her grave-clothes bound,
  Ghastly smiling, points a seat;
All arose, with thundering sound;
  All the expected stranger greet.

High their meagre arms they wave,
  Wild their notes of welcome swell;
'Welcome, traitor, to the grave!
  Perjured, bid the light farewell!'

I have given the greater part of this strange ballad because of its intrinsic value and the celebrity of its German author. But the part that may have inspired Buchanan is only the part concerning the wandering over the black moor, the light seen in the distance, the ghostly banquet of the dead, and the ruined vaults. A great poet would have easily found in these details the suggestion which Buchanan found for the wandering of Judas to the light and the unexpected vision of the dead assembling to a banquet with him—but only this. The complete transformation of the fancy, the transmutation of the purely horrible into a

ghostly beauty and tenderness, is the wonderful thing. After all, this is the chief duty of the poet in this world, to discover beauty even in the ugly, suggestions of beauty even in the cruel and terrible. This Buchanan did once so very well that his work will never be forgotten, but he received thereafter no equal inspiration, and "The Ballad of Judas" remains, alone of its kind, his only real claim to high distinction.

The poetry of Robert Buchanan is not great enough as poetry to justify many quotations, but as thinking it demands some attention. His third volume is especially of interest in this respect, because it contains a curious exposition of his religious idealism. Buchanan is a mystic; there is no doubt that he has been very much influenced by the mysticism of Blake. The whole of the poems collectively entitled "The Devil's Mystics," must have been suggested by Blake's nomenclature. This collection belongs to "the Book of Orm," which might have been well called "The Book of Robert Buchanan." Orm ought to be a familiar name to students of English literature, one of the old English books also being called "The Ormulum," because it was written by a man named Orm. Buchanan's Orm is represented to be an ancient Celt, who has visions and dreams about the mystery of the universe, and who puts these visions and dreams, which are Buchanan's, into old-fashioned verse.

The great Ernest Renan said in his "Dialogues et Fragments Philosophiques" that if everybody in the world who had thought much about the mystery of things were to write down his ideas regarding the Infinite, some great truth might be discovered or deduced from the result. Buchanan has tried to follow this suggestion; for he has very boldly put down all his thoughts about the world and man and God. As to results, however, I can find nothing particularly original except two or three queer fancies, none of which relates to the deeper riddles of being. In a preface in verse, the author further tells us that when he speaks of God he does

not mean the Christian God or the God of India nor any particular God, but only the all-including Spirit of Life. Be that as it may, we find his imagery to be certainly borrowed from old Hebrew and old Christian thinkers; here he has not fulfilled expectations. But the imagery is used to express some ideas which I think you will find rather new—not exactly philosophical ideas, but moral parables.

One of these is a parable about the possible consequences of seeing or knowing the divine power which is behind the shadows of things. Suppose that there were an omnipotent God whom we could see; what would be the consequences of seeing him? Orm discovered that the blue of the sky was a blue veil drawn across Immensity to hide the face of God. One day, in answer to prayer, God drew aside the blue veil. Then all mankind were terrified because they saw, by day and by night, an awful face looking down upon them out of the sky, the sleepless eyes of the face seeming to watch each person constantly wherever he was. Did this make men happy? Not at all. They became tired of life, finding themselves perpetually watched; they covered their cities with roofs, and lived by lamp light only, in order to avoid being looked at in the face by God. This queer parable, recounted in the form of a dream, has a meaning worth thinking about. The ultimate suggestion, of course, is that we do not know and see many things because it would make us very unhappy to know them.

An equally curious parable, also related in the form of a dream, treats of the consolations of death. What would become of mankind if there were no death? I think you will remember that I told you how the young poet William Watson took up the same subject a few years ago, in his remarkable poem "The Dream of Man." Watson's supposition is that men became so wise, so scientific, that they were able to make themselves immortal and to conquer death. But at last they became frightfully unhappy, unutterably tired of life, and were obliged to beg God to give them back death again. And God said to them, "You are hap-

pier than I am. You can die; I cannot. The only happiness of existence is effort. Now you can have your friend death back again." Buchanan's idea was quite different from this. His poem is called "The Dream of the World without Death." Men prayed to God that there might be no more death or decay of the body; and the prayer was granted. People continued to disappear from the world, but they did not die. They simply vanished, when their time came, as ghosts. A child goes out to play in the field, for example, and never comes back again; the mother finds only the empty clothes of her darling. Or a peasant goes to the fields to work, and his body is never seen again. People found that this was a much worse condition of things than had been before. For the consolation of knowledge, of certainty, was not given them. The dead body is a certificate of death; nature uses corruption as a seal, an official exhibit and proof of the certainty of death. But when there is no body, no corpse, no possible sign, how horrible is the disappearance of the persons we love. The mystery of it is a much worse pain than the certain knowledge of death. Doubt is the worst form of torture. Well, when mankind had this experience, they began to think that, after all, death was a beautiful and good thing, and they prayed most fervently that they might again have the privilege of dying in the old way, of putting the bodies of their dead into beautiful tombs, of being able to visit the graves of their beloved from time to time. So God took pity on them and gave them back death, and the poet sings his gratitude thus:

> And I cried, 'O unseen Sender of Corruption,
> I bless Thee for the wonder of Thy mercy,
> Which softeneth the mystery and the parting.
>
> 'I bless thee for the change and for the comfort,
> The bloomless face, shut eyes, and waxen fingers, –
> For Sleeping, and for Silence, and Corruption.'

This idea is worth something, if only as a vivid teaching

of the necessity of things as they are. The two fantasies thus commented upon are the most original things in the range of this mystical book. I could not recommend any further reading or study of the poet, except perhaps of his "Vision of the Man Accurst." But even this has not the true stamp of originality; and only "The Ballad of Judas Iscariot" is certain not to be soon forgotten.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE POETRY OF LORD DE TABLEY

OUR last lecture* was about a poet difficult of appreciation by the common reader, and our present lecture will treat of another poet of the rare class—very different indeed from Bridges, but in some respect more exquisite; indeed, he is one of the most exquisite poets even of a period which included Tennyson and Rossetti. Perhaps some of you have not even heard of his name; I confess that he is not widely known, except to men of letters. But that is because he is too exquisite for the general reader. As for his real position in poetry, it will be enough to observe that Tennyson, who was very economical about his admiration, greatly admired this man; and in some respects De Tabley's work is really equal to some of Tennyson's work. Perhaps you will think that we are taking up rather difficult poets. This is true; but it seems to me important that the highest poetry, no matter how little generally known, should be somewhat more than known to university students. A word about the poet himself, who commonly wrote during his lifetime under the name of Lancaster. His real name was John Byrne Leicester Warren, Lord De Tabley; and he was the last of an illustrious and aristocratic race. He was born in 1835 and died in 1895—not quite six years ago. He was an Oxford man, and a distinguished scholar, not only in one but in a multitude of directions. He was also distinguished as a numismatist, as a book-collector, as a student of classical antiquities, and as a botanist. But he was one of the shyest men who ever lived, sometimes disappearing altogether for many years at a time. In later life it was said of

* *On Poets*, Chapter XXXIII "Robert Bridges."

him that he had only two friends, and that he had not seen one of them for five years nor the other for six years. This was perhaps partly due to a remarkably sensitive organization; but I have an idea that the sensitiveness must have been greatly aggravated by life at English public schools. A sensitive boy is certain to be made extremely unhappy at an English public school, and the unhappiness may often be of a kind that poisons life. The misfortunes of Shelley and other distinguished men have no doubt been partly due to the treatment they received in public schools. There are exceptions, of course, as in the case of a sensitive boy who happens to be uncommonly strong and uncommonly aggressive. Some day, when it is sensibly recognized that a boy having a delicate and artistic temperament ought not to be subjected to the brutality of English public schools, fewer lives will be spoiled.

Lord De Tabley's peculiar character, however, must have been in part hereditary; his delicacy was the rare delicacy we find in members of old princely families that are becoming extinct. No better illustration of his capacity for affection need be mentioned than the fact that when a college friend of his was accidentally killed, many years passed before he recovered from the grief of this misfortune; and even late in life, he could not bear to hear the name of his dead friend mentioned, for it caused him too much pain. To such a nature, the least unkind word or look, the least vulgarity or egotism of manner, necessarily gave great pain. He could not mingle with men without hurt; and therefore he eventually resigned himself to doing without them, locking himself up with his books, his statues, his rare coins, and his botanical specimens. He was the friend of nearly all the great poets and thinkers of the time; but he saw them only at long intervals.

Of course a man who thus shut out the nineteenth century could not very well reflect it in his work. Lord De Tabley, although one of the latest and most exquisite poets of the century, did not belong to it in feeling. He seems to

have inherited an intense love for the artistic principles of the classic age. He did not indeed care for classical form, as the school of Pope understood it; he did not write much in the heroic couplet. On the contrary he liked better, infinitely better, the Elizabethan form and the later romantic form; and the poet who of all poets most influenced him, even while shocking him, was Swinburne. What I mean by his affinity to eighteenth century poetry is the importance which he attaches to the form of the rhymes, to the melody of the verse, quite irrespective of subject and feeling. The modern high art in poetry makes the form the secondary, not the primary, consideration. In the eighteenth century the rule was exactly the opposite; and Lord De Tabley observed that rule. Since he was in all his heart and soul a true poet, the result was beautiful; for we find the thought as exquisite as the verse in the best of his work. You must not expect, however, much original thought from Lord De Tabley; he was not a great thinker. His originality lies in the musical colour of his verse, and in a certain delightful tenderness and vividness in his expression of emotion or of feeling for Nature. Where he sometimes equalled Tennyson was in the description of natural scenery and animal life.

I must also tell you that not all of De Tabley's poetry is excellent. A great deal of what he wrote in early life, both dramatic and narrative, is worth nothing at all. He acknowledged the fact himself. For many years after, he actually gave up all hope of being a poet, and returned to the art only in the evening of his career. But the little volume published only two or three years before his death, under the simple title of "Poems," represents the essence of all that was best in him. It is a wonderful work. I believe that his failure as a poet in early life was principally due to his natural timidity—his instinctive fear of saying something that might seem unconventional, incorrect, not according to the canons. This timidity does not appear at all in his little collection of lyrical verse.

De Tabley must be studied quite as closely as Tennyson,

perhaps even more so; for he has not always Tennyson's clearness. To quote much from him is difficult, and I do not wish to quote more than will be necessary to interest you. But I think that you will understand his value better through a close study of a dozen selections from his best pieces. We may begin with an exquisite composition of which the subject is a morning visit to the grave of some beautiful woman, loved and lost. It is entitled "A Woodland Grave."

Bring no jarring lute this way
  To demean her sepulchre,
Toys of love and idle day
  Vanish as we think of her.
    We, who read her epitaph,
    Find the world not worth a laugh.

Light, our light, what dusty night
  Numbs the golden drowsy head?
Lo! empathed in pearls of light,
  Morn resurgent from the dead:
    From whose amber shoulders flow
    Shroud and sheet of cloudy woe.

Woods are dreaming, and she dreams:
  Through the foliaged roof above
Down immeasurably streams
  Splendour like an angel's love.
    Till the tomb and gleaming urn
    In a midst of glory burn.

No ordinary poet could write such magnificent verse as this; in such stanzas Lord De Tabley becomes for a moment the equal of Tennyson. Only for a moment. The other stanzas of the poem are indeed scarcely less splendid in workmanship; but they are much less satisfactory in thought and sentiment. Let us look back at the three stanzas just read.

The first, declaring that no music should be played at the woodland grave, because her loss has taught the mourner the emptiness of all life and all art, needs no explanation.

The second, with its beautiful but quite legitimate obscurity, is so contrived as to give you, after careful reading, the exact sensation which the morning hour of the visit to the grave makes within the speaker's mind.

Already you may have noticed the love of this poet for curious and beautiful words, such as "empathed;" also for sonorous Latin words, which are used only when they can give a fine effect, like the word "resurgent." This is an exquisite word here, when we remember that the Latin "resurgo" (I rise) and the Latin "resurgam" (I shall rise again) are commonly used in inscriptions upon tombs, so that the corresponding English "resurgent" here takes a singular *mortuary* value. But the art of Lord De Tabley's verse is, I think, best shown in a splendid ode to the Heavenly Venus with which the final collection of his poems opens.

This ode certainly shows the influence of Swinburne. We know that it never could have been written by him if Swinburne's "Dolores" had not been written first. Lord De Tabley was one of those timid poets who worked best with a model before him; and in spite of the influence of the model he is never a plagiarist. On the contrary he always manages to make his subject appeal to us in a perfectly original way. No English verse was ever written superior in melody and sensuous charm to the wonderful poem of Swinburne just mentioned. Lord De Tabley was too wise to attempt the same kind of measure. He never imitates other men's form. What he has really done, however, is to magnify the subject chosen by Swinburne, and to treat it in an equally powerful, but very different, way. The Venus of Swinburne's "Dolores" is Venus the Prostitute; the Venus of Lord De Tabley is Venus Astarte, the Venus of Lucretius, the all-pervading creating power of the universe, of the universe as comprehended by the modern mind. This subject, I need scarcely tell you, is very grand as well as very terrible; but Lord De Tabley had the greatest Roman poets and philosophers to suggest to him how it should

be treated. I am sure that you will admire some of these stanzas from the "Hymn to Astarte."

Regent of Love and Pain,
  Before whose ageless eyes
The nations pass as rain,
  And thou abidest, wise,
    As dewdrops in a cup
    To drink thy children up.

Parent of Change and Death,
  We know thee and are sad,—
The scent of thy pale wreath,
  Thy lip-touch and the glad
    Sweep of thy glistening hair:
    We know thee, bitter-fair.

Empress of earth, and queen
  Of cloud: Time's early born
Daughter, enthroned between
  Gray Sleep and emerald Morn;
    Ruler of us who fade:
    God, of the gods obeyed!

Divine, whose eye-glance sweet
  Is earth and heaven's desire:
Beneath whose pearly feet
  The skies irradiate fire,
    And the cold cloud-way glows
    As some rain-burnished rose.

Heaven, dumb before thy face
  With fear and deep delight,
Tingles thro' all its space:
  The abysmal shuddering night,
    Breaks, as in golden tears,
    Into a thousand spheres.

You must understand the classical and philosophic fancy, however, to understand more than splendid form and sound. It is the Creating Power that is thus addressed, the Love

that is older than all gods, that made the heavens and the worlds before making the gods themselves and making the hearts of men. And this power acts equally in the attraction of sun by sun and in the attraction of the heart of man by the beauty of woman. Only the philosopher, the deep thinker, can perceive the infinite character of this power, can identify it with all that men have justly named Divine; but all men feel in some sort the influence of it upon their lives, in the pleasures and in the pains of affection. However, few think to themselves that the force which they call love is really the same thing that fills the great night of space with the millions of the stars. Now love and death are really very closely related, just as the Greeks supposed them to be and as the mythology of India also represented them. In fact, they are but two different modes of the same infinite force. That which creates is also that which destroys; therefore in the Indian myth the most formidable personification of divinity is represented with the symbol of life in one hand, and a skull, the symbol of death, in the other. Life is possible only because of death—death is like the rhythm of life; we decay because we grow, and we die only because we are born. Just why these things should be we do not know, probably never shall know; but we can perceive the law. It is this mysterious law, at once beautiful and terrible, tender and cruel, which the poet is really representing. So the greatest of Roman poets and thinkers, Lucretius, represented it nearly two thousand years ago. The subject is the most imposing that a poet could touch. Lord De Tabley was not perhaps enough of a thinker to express with sublimity the profounder phases of the mystery as a greater philosopher might have expressed them. But he had before him the thoughts of greater men; and the splendour of his verse makes up for the philosophical weakness he might be accused of.

When you look into the sky on a beautiful clear night, without a moon, you see a long white trail reaching over the heavens like a ghostly bridge; you know that all ancient

religions taught poetical legends about this apparition. In some mythologies it is a Celestial River; in others it is a Road of Souls, the pathway of the dead. The Egyptians represented it, however, in the most weird of all forms, as the white body of a woman bending across the sky, her feet touching one horizon and her hands the other, the highest part of the arch figuring her flanks and breast. This was Neit, mother of the gods and of all worlds. Very curious are the pictures of Neit painted by the old Egyptian artists. The Greeks had a less sublime but more tender fancy about the white track; they said that it was formed by milk that had dropped from the breasts of the mother of the gods, and they were the first to call it the Milky Way, a term which in the Latin translation we still use—*Via Lactea.* Now the Egyptian and the Greek and many other myths were in the later times of the Roman Empire fused together, in explaining the attributes of deity. Eastern teachers had shown the Romans how to make their divinities infinite in conception; and Astarte, as the Romans came to know her, became a blending of thousands of divinities and divine attributes. Lord De Tabley takes this later conception of Astarte, containing both Greek and Egyptian elements, for his theme; and it has enabled him to create the following wonderful stanzas:

Rise, pressing Love to rest
  Against thy shoulder pearled:
Each dewdrop of thy breast
  Becomes a starry world,
    And the vast breathless skies
    Are strown with galaxies.

Nurse of eternity,
  Thy bosom feeds the sun.
From thy maternity
  All breasts in nature run.
    Astarte, to thy ray,
    Sick of all gods, we pray.

The sublime imagery here is a magnification both of the

ancient Egyptian fancy and of the Greek dream of Cybele, the All-nourishing Mother, making all fruitful. I suppose you will see that the magnification is chiefly due to the introduction of modern astronomical ideas. To us the heavens have become incomparably vaster than they were to the ancients; therefore, when we apply to the celestial vision any of the strange or beautiful ancient similes, those similes become immensely magnified and infinitely more imposing. The poet also addresses Astarte as a divinity of destiny, of love-destiny—the fate that makes the union of every one with the chosen woman.

Ah, could a mortal gaze
  In thy mysterious eyes;
And, thro' their mirrored maze
  And treasured secrecies,
    See rising like a star
    The soul he wants afar!

This is very beautiful, the wish that one could see within the eyes of God the image of the woman desired, the one soul in all things harmonious with the soul of the seeker, the ideal woman that every man dreams of, but that so few ever find. Here I may quote a few verses from the description of Love's temple, because of their musical and luminous beauty.

I have seen thy silver fane
  And trod thy slippery stair,
Red with a crimson rain
  And foot-worn with despair.
    Pale as dead men, ah, sweet,
    We kneel to kiss thy feet.

We have leave one little hour
  In thy white house to doze:
Broad passion-flowers embower
  The portals amber-rose,
    And lotos lilies keep
    Guard at thy shrine of sleep.

As drowsy flies which bide
  In some gray spider's snare;
Sleep-locked yet open-eyed,
  Glad yet in half despair,
    Lovers and maidens sit
    In the yellow gates of it.

The suggestion here is of the eternal illusion that urges men to all desperate things, causing death and crime and suicide for the sake of an ideal. Therefore is the shrine described as red with the blood of men. The reference to the passion flowers needs no explanation; but I may remind you that the Greek lotus flowers signify sleep, a sleep like that of opium, in which the eyes see and ears continue to hear and the body is free to move, yet all things seem unreal and far away. In the third of the stanzas quoted the lovers are represented as being helpless like flies in the web of spiders, caught in the great spider-web of their passion. They are at once both glad and sad; everything seems to them very beautiful, more beautiful than it really could be; and the gates of the shrine at which they worship appear to be of purest yellow gold. But all this is only dream, fascination, folly; nothing lasts, beauty withers, youth vanishes, and death ends the passion and the illusion. What then is the meaning of this love power, this irresistible attraction that comes upon men? And what is death?

Ah, girl-mouth, burning dew
  That made the violet faint,
What shall become of you,
  My silver-breasted saint?
    What morning shall arise
    Upon those darkened eyes?

In other words, what is the use of loveliness and love, beauty and worship, charm and youth, since all these pass away like smoke? Will the face that charms, the voice that caresses, ever be seen, ever be heard of again? Religions change or die, the gods themselves die and are for-

gotten, but the tremendous mystery of the universe remains —the mystery of love creating all things, only to give them to death. What does it mean?

Locked in blind heaven aloof,
  The gods are gray and dead.
Worn is the old world's woof,
  Weary the sun's bright head.
    The sea is out of tune,
    And sick the silver moon.

The May-fly lives an hour,
  The star a million years;
But as a summer flower,
  Or as a maiden's fears,
    They pass, and heaven is bare
    As tho' they never were.

God withers his place,
  His patient angels fade:
Love, on thy sacred face,
  Of tear and sunbeam made,
    In our perplexity
    We turn, and gazing die.

This is only another way, though a sublime and very weird one, of stating the great mystery of life. We do not know where we came from, nor why we exist, nor where we are going to; and we see that perpetual change is the order of the universe. But one thing ever remains the same—the attraction of sex for sex, the desire of the male for the female, the perpetual illusion of love, with all its joys and all its pains. What the creating power may be, the power that shapes, the power that dissolves, we do not know. But it is surely the same power which makes suns burn, that also makes the beauty of woman seem of all things the fairest to the heart of a young man.

I would next call your attention to a fragment of the poem of Circe. Perhaps I had better first say something about Circe hereself, though this has very little to do with

the poem. Circe, in old Greek story, was a beautiful witch, who lived on an island of which she was the supreme ruler. All men who came to that island were hospitably invited to her home, and feasted on their favourite foods. Some of them were even allowed to make love to her, to share her bed. But sooner or later each of them was given a cup of magical wine to drink, and when he had drunk this wine he was changed into a beast. In the story of Circe, as told by Homer, the companions of Ulysses were turned into swine by this means; Ulysses himself, however, was cunning enough not to let himself be bewitched. I suppose you see the moral, the inner meaning which we can take from the myth. The name Circe is still given to that kind of wanton woman who can make men not simply foolish, but wicked and worthless; the love of a bad woman really can change a man into a beast, morally speaking. The story has inspired hundreds of artists, both in ancient and in modern times. Lord De Tabley treats the subject only artistically, not morally; he gives us only a word-picture of the interior of Circe's palace, and the strange things that could be seen there. The descriptive passage which I am going to quote is a very fine example of goldsmith work in language, the very jewellery of verse,

> . . . Reared across a loom,
> Hung a fair web of tapestry half done,
> Crowding with folds and fancies half the room:
> Men eyed as gods and damsels still as stone,
> Pressing their brows alone,
> In amethystine robes,
> Or reaching at the polished orchard globes,
> Or rubbing parted love-lips on their rind,
> While the wind
> Sows with sere apple leaves their breast and hair.
> And all the margin there
> Was arabesqued and bordered intricate
> With hairy spider things
> That catch and clamber,
> And salamander in his dripping cave

Satanic ebon-amber;
Blind worm, and asp, and eft of cumbrous gait,
And toads who love rank grasses near a grave,
And the great goblin moth, who bears
Between his wings the ruined eyes of death;
And the enamelled sails
Of butterflies, who watch the morning's breath.
And many an emerald lizard with quick ears
Asleep in rocky dales.
And for an outer fringe embroidered small,
A ring of many locusts, horny-coated,
A round of chirping tree-frogs merry-throated,
And sly, fat fishes sailing, watching all.

This is a description of the tapestry in the detailed Greek manner, reminding us of the famous classic description of the shield of Achilles. But the charm of the work is in the effectiveness and suggestiveness of the word-choosing. "Polished orchard globes" means of course only apples, but the phrase gives you the exact idea as to what kind of apple is referred to. "Ebon-amber" is the best expression possible to describe the semi-diaphanous dark body of the salamander; and the adjective "Satanic" joined to this, suggests the fantastic ugliness of the strange creature. I do not know whether any of you have seen the death's-head moth, which is very common in England and is a great enemy of bee-hives. Upon the back of this moth you can see very plainly the figure of a human skull; the insect has therefore naturally been associated for hundreds of years with superstitious fancy. The thing about a skull which first especially strikes the observer is the absence of eyes; the aspect of the great hollow cavities has something sinister which startles and sometimes terrifies. By using the phrase "ruined eyes of death" instead of the term skull, a very powerful image is produced. Notice also the delicate use of the word "shells" to describe the wings of the butterfly; it has been used by very old poets, but not to describe such small pinions as those of an insect. Its effectiveness here is

especially in the suggestion of the slow flight peculiar to the butterfly, whose wings move so slowly that you can always see them beating the air, and to the eye they really look like tiny shells, whereas the wings of a dragon-fly or of a bee in motion are not seen at all except as a kind of haze about the creature's back.

Speaking of insects, one of the most remarkable of all poems ever made about insects is Lord De Tabley's "Study of a Spider." This poem I found to be much too elaborate for the general lecture on insect poetry which I gave lately in another class; it would have required too much explanation. But in this class we can very well study its extraordinary and fantastic charm. All the words here are chosen with a view to producing one general effect of horror. The spider suggests a great many things to poets. It suggests beauty, curiosity, and terror, and the poet may take his choice among these characteristics. Lord De Tabley has chosen to take the grimmer aspect, just as Browning chose to take the ghostly one when he wrote in "Mesmerism" the famous lines—

> And the spider, to serve his ends,
> By a sudden thread,
> Arms and legs outspread,
> On the table's midst descends,
> Comes to find, God knows what friends!—

Really the spider is an awful creature in a certain way; and the very ugliest fact about it is the sexual relation of the insect. The female spider is much larger than the male. After the male approaches and fecundates her, she turns upon him and devours him. After I have told you this fact, you will not perhaps think that Lord De Tabley is too severe in his judgment of the spider.

> From holy flower to holy flower
> Thou weavest thine unhallowed bower.
> The harmless dewdrops, beaded thin,
> Ripple along thy ropes of sin.

Thy house a grave, a gulf thy throne
Affright the fairies every one.
Thy winding sheets are gray and fell,
Imprisoning with nets of hell
The lovely births that winnow by,
Winged sisters of the rainbow sky:
Elf-darlings, fluffy, bee-bright things,
And owl-white moths with mealy wings,
And tiny flies, as gauzy thin
As e'er were shut electrum in.
These are thy death spoils, insect ghoul,
With their dear life thy fangs are foul.
Thou felon anchorite of pain
Who sittest in a world of slain.
Hermit, who tunest song unsweet
To heaving wing and writhing feet.
A glutton of creation's sighs,
Miser of many miseries.
Toper, whose lonely feasting chair
Sways in inhospitable air.
The board is bare, the bloated host
Drinks to himself toast after toast.
His lip requires no goblet brink
But like a weazel must he drink.
The vintage is as old as time
And bright as sunset, pressed and prime.

Ah, venom mouth and shaggy thighs
And paunch grown sleek with sacrifice,
Thy dolphin back and shoulders round
Coarse-hairy, as some goblin hound
Whom a hag rides to sabbath on,
While shuddering stars in fear grow wan.
Thou palace priest of treachery,
Thou type of selfish lechery,
I break the toils around thy head
And from their gibbets take thy dead.

In the first two lines the words "holy" and "unhallowed" are of course used as synonym and antonym. You may ask why a flower should be spoken of as holy, sacred.

It is because flowers represent in Western symbolism virtues, excellences, and proprieties—things divine and things beautiful. Thus the white lily signifies chastity; the violet, maidenly modesty; the rose, ever so many things which are holy—to mention only the highest circle of heaven, the symbolic name of the Mother of God, and the charm of womanhood. Among these flowers, emblems of all pure and holy things, the spider's nest does indeed represent all the contraries,—hell as compared with heaven, the devil with angels, crime as contrasted with the highest and most beautiful expression of life. Even the frail beauty of the dew, as indicated in the next couplet, ceases to seem beautiful on the strings of the deadly snare of the spider. The reference to the fairies must be understood in relation to the pretty superstitions that good fairies lived in flowers. In the next few couplets there is nothing to explain, but please notice the delicate power and beauty of the adjectives. "Fell," the old word signifying deadly, has a fine quality here as coupled with the word "gray" to describe the web, rightly termed a "winding-sheet," the wrapping of the dead. "Fluffy" gives us the idea of something cottony or flossy, like silk waste; the bodies of many beautiful insects look as if they were covered with a kind of silk or cotton floss. The verb "winnow" here expresses especially the visible motion of the butterfly's wings. Why is the moth compared to an owl, in the line about "owl-white moths"? Because both are night creatures and fly about at the same time. The white owl has a very beautiful plumage, and looks like a mass of snow. So does the white English night moth, which has a remarkably plump body, covered with something like snowy down. Moths and butterflies may both be said to have "mealy wings"; you cannot touch the wing without getting your fingers smirched with something that appears to be like flour but is really composed of beautiful scale-feathers. A little further you read of flies being shut into "electrum"; perhaps you will not be so accustomed to this word as to the word "amber." Of course you know that in amber

there has been preserved for us many kinds of insects, some of which do not now seem to exist. "Ghoul" ought to be familiar to everybody who has read the Arabian stories. The word is of Arab origin; the ghoul is a creature supposed to live in cemeteries, to devour the bodies of the dead, and to entice the living to destruction. Sometimes the ghoul takes the form of a beautiful woman sitting by the road side and inviting the caress of travellers. But whoever approaches her is devoured. Next we have a spider described as a felon or criminal anchorite—that is to say, hermit. The solitary habit of the spider could hardly be better described by any two words. The hermit is supposed to pass part of his time in singing hymns; the spider hermit is silent, but he makes his victims sound harsh music—meaning the buzzing of the captured flies, whose struggles are excellently described by the words "heaving wing and writhing feet." The words "toper" and "bloated" refer commonly to drunkards, the latter word picturing the swollen appearance of the face and body of the habitual drinker. The spider has indeed a bloated look, but it is blood that he drinks, not wine; therefore his drink is spoken of as being old as time and bright as sunset—that is, bright red like the sinking sun. The weasel does not eat the flesh of its victims, but sucks the blood; the spider is especially a sucker, so his drinking is compared to the drinking of the weasel. The last ten lines of the composition include comparisons of the spider to all ugly things, coupled in all monstrous contrasts. Notice the word "shaggy" in the first of those lines; it means much more than hairy—a shaggy surface is one covered not with smooth but with long rough hair. The back is compared to a dolphin's only because it is humped; and round shoulders refer to deformed shoulders. A round-shouldered person is a person who cannot stand straight. "Goblin hound"—that is to say, goblin dog—is a comparsion that will scarcely be familiar to some of you unless you have seen pictures of the witches' Sabbath. In some of the finely illustrated German editions of

"Faust" you will be able to find such pictures. The witches are represented as going to attend the wicked sacrifices at night, riding through the air upon goblin animals, such as goats and dogs. These spectral animals are really evil demons, and the witches are mostly represented as very ugly old women, called "hags." Next we have the term "palace priest of treachery," probably because many of the famous intrigues of history were managed by priests who in virtue of their sacred character were trusted in the palaces of kings. In the last line but one, remember that the word "toils" is often used by old poets to signify the lines of a snare or the meshes of a net.

With this hasty analysis of the description, I believe that you will be able to find some pleasure in studying the lines for yourselves. No poem in the book gives a fuller illustration of Lord De Tabley's skill as a master of fine language. With "The Study of a Spider," we may close this lecture about him. If you can appreciate the few selections which I have made, I think you will like to return at a later time to the study of him.

CHAPTER XXXV

A NOTE ON MUNBY'S "DOROTHY"

THERE are several reasons why the poem entitled "Dorothy" should be made well known to you. First of all it represents in a very striking manner a new spirit of pastoral poetry in the latter part of the Victorian period. In the second place it is a poem which has been very widely read and admired both in England and America—in fact, wherever the English language is read. And in the third place it can give you some notions about the life of the peasant classes in England and about their relation to the upper classes, almost better than any other book can do. Finally I may add that it touches strongly and sensibly upon certain economic facts of life, opposing the sentimental laws forbidding women to do the work of men. You know that there are several sides to this question; it is not to be lightly decided, and I am not a teacher of ethics or economics, or of the relation between ethics and economics, so I shall not attempt to express any opinion on the subject at present. But you should certainly be interested in the view of the matter taken by the author of this book, who ought to be able to judge of such matters well, since he is an eminent lawyer, a good scholar, an official representing government interests in the country districts, and a farmer and a poet. Such a combination of knowledge and experience should entitle a man to express an opinion about the conditions of the peasantry.

When this book first appeared it was published anonymously. But now it is well known as the work of Arthur Joseph Munby, an English lawyer who occasionally visits London, but who has lived for the greater part of his life in the country, especially in Surrey. Munby was born in

Yorkshire, which district, by the way, possesses the finest peasantry in England. His birth was in 1828, so that he must now be quite an old man; but he published a volume of new poems only this year. It is rather a curious combination which he presents—farmer, country squire, and lawyer all in one, yet finding time to be a poet. University training developed his power to write poetry almost as easily as other men write prose; this partly may account for the phenomenon. I do not mean to say that it is great poetry; no man can be a great poet and exercise three other professions at the same time. But it is not bad poetry, it is actually better than the work of Arthur Hugh Clough, the friend of Matthew Arnold, who wrote very much the same kind of verse, and there is a merit in it besides that of poetry proper. As a romance in verse, the measure and construction of "Dorothy" do not greatly impress the reader; in fact you are sometimes surprised, and almost made angry, by the apparent indifference to poetical rules. But after you have read the work, the impression left upon the mind is very strong and very pleasing, and you will not forget it. The book has the power to charm; it has charmed tens of thousands of readers. The secret of the charm is not, as I have suggested, in the literary art, but in the feeling of the book, in the author's grasp of the subject, in his knowledge of and sympathy with country life. From boyhood this man liked the peasants, saw their good qualities and admired them, learned their dialects and liked to talk to them. I may mention here also that he has written a good deal of poetry in peasant dialect, although a university scholar. And one day he conceived the idea of trying to interest the English upper classes in the humble life of these country folk whom they pretended to despise. But he had many prejudices to face in order to be able to do this well. He had to be prepared to meet every possible kind of sneer and jeer on the part of snobs and cads. He had to expect to be told that his peasants were dirty, smelled bad, had ugly hands, ugly faces, ugly feet, ugly manners,

and detestable stupidity into the bargain. And then he met these prejudices and affectations simply by drawing peasant life as he saw it. He described all the dirt and the smell and the vulgarity and the ignorance in his poems —even exaggerating them; and nevertheless he made people like them, admire them, almost love them when he had done. The fact is, nearly all class prejudices, based upon social conditions, are utter humbug; and they would scarcely exist if the upper classes were less ignorant than they are of what is noble and good and human in the lowest classes. Munby did not attempt to fight prejudices by denying their cause or denying their assertions, but by bringing the real human facts into the light, and making people look at them fairly and squarely. I think this is all I need say about the social side of the poem.

But I must tell you something about English peasant life, country life, labouring life, before I quote to you anything from "Dorothy." I do not think that much is known in Japan about English country life, though a good deal is now known about the life of the cities and of their industrial classes. Japanese travellers do not have either the time or the opportunity to go out into the country and study the peasant. And yet, not to study the peasantry of a country must be to remain with a very imperfect knowledge of the nation. For the body, the strength, the whole power of the race is there. In England, perhaps, the difficulty of studying the agricultural classes is especially great, for the extraordinary reason that the agricultural classes are gradually disappearing. The entire country is owned by a few thousand people; there is no future in store for the common worker, and the advent of the complicated machinery into field work dispenses with a great deal of human labour. Therefore the English peasantry emigrates whenever it can, and in the future its place will perhaps be taken by an inferior foreign class. But, as I have said, to know the English race one should know something about its peasants. The excellent French thinker Taine, who made

an admirable book of English travels, understood this perfectly well, and he based his studies of English character largely upon his observation of the agricultural and the working classes.

At the time when Munby wrote his poem, women in the English country district used to do extraordinary work, perhaps more than they do now. There were plenty of women blacksmiths, women colliers, women farmers—in fact, almost every department of heavy labour had places for women as well as for men. I believe that legislation subsequently changed a good many of these conditions, forbidding women, for example, to work in the coal mines dressed in men's clothes. But as a boy I remember seeing much heavy work done by women, and I do not know that the legislation was altogether wise. Only a very particular class of women could do the work against which the laws were passed, and that class of women were particularly well fitted by nature to do it. You could not have told, by the eye alone, whether those working women were men or women; their voices might betray them, but not their walk or their bulk. Among them were figures six feet high, with shoulders broad as a wrestler's, arms muscled like those of a man, and walking with the long swinging step of a man in great heavy shoes. The impression you received on seeing them work was that there was nothing womanly about them, for their roughness of appearance was equal to the roughness of men.

Among the peasant class proper—I mean among those who remain all their lives at farm work—this masculinity does not appear to the same degree in manners. The labouring woman in the country is often huge and strong but seldom unwomanly. Her manner remains gentle and kind. It is the contact with the life of the mines, with mechanical industries and manufactories, that seems to make the woman rough. They lose the moral tone of their sex—I do not mean by this that they become bad, but they cease to act and talk like women. It is not so in the country; it

is so only in the manufacturing and mining towns. Now it is of the country girl that Mr. Munby writes, and he takes for his type one of the lowest class of workers, a female farm servant.

I must tell you something about these female servants. A woman must be very strong indeed to be a servant in the country, not only in England but even in America. A woman employed as servant on a farm must do what would be considered in this country hard work for at least six persons. She must cook three times a day for the entire household, she must bake bread in addition to cooking, she must do all the washing of the family, and keep the house clean, and she must help with the work on the farm—milking and feeding the cow, taking care of the poultry, doing, in short, the work of both a man and a woman. One must be very strong indeed for such labour; and it is no wonder that women are gradually passing from the sphere of domestic employment, to be replaced by men.

Can we imagine any romance in so hard a life? Our English poet has proved to us that romance may be found in it quite as well as in any other walk of life—though of a different kind.

Let us take the plan of the story as he tells it to us, giving extracts here and there to show the attraction of his verse. It is good verse, all hexameters and pentameters alternating; and although this kind of verse cannot be made quite perfect in English by anybody, Mr. Munby's hexameters will certainly compare very well with either Longfellow's or Clough's. He first tells us about the birth of the girl on the farm—an illegitimate child, and therefore destined to hard work without any parental affection to soften the way for her, but honest, good, kind, and beautiful. Here is a little description, which includes the description of a farm girl in general:

Weakly her mistress was, and weakly the two little daughters;
  But by her master's side Dorothy wrought like a son:
Wrought out of doors on the farm, and labour'd in dairy and kitchen,

Doing the work of two; help and support of them all.
Rough were her broad brown hands, and within, ah me! they were horny:
Rough were her thick ruddy arms, shapely and round as they were:
Rough too her glowing cheeks; and her sunburnt face and forehead
Browner than cairngorm seem'd, set in her amber-bright hair.
Yet 'twas a handsome face; the beautiful regular features
Labour could never spoil, ignorance could not degrade:
And in her clear blue eyes bright gleams of intelligence linger'd;
And on her warm red mouth, Love might have 'lighted and lain.
Never an unkind word nor a rude unseemly expression
Came from that soft red mouth; nor in those sunny blue eyes
Lived there a look that belied the frankness of innocent girlhood—
Fearless, because it is pure; gracious, and gentle, and calm.
Have you not seen such a face, among rural hard-working maidens
Born but of peasant stock, free from our Dorothy's shame?
Just such faces as hers—a countenance open and artless,
Where no knowledge appears, culture, nor vision of grace;
Yet which an open-air life and simple and strenuous labour
Fills with a charm of its own—precious, and warm from the heart?

I think the author insists too much in his poem upon the roughness and hardness of Dorothy's hands. As a matter of fact, no soft-handed woman could be a good worker, and it is the custom to look at a woman's hands before giving her work to do on a farm. If they are soft and white, they belong to a lazy woman. It is good to recognize the honesty of a hard working hand, to recognize that there is a certain nobility in labour, but I think that Munby insists too much on the ugliness of hard hands. Really hard hands are not any uglier than any other hands, except to fastidious persons; perhaps Mr. Munby was only desiring to anticipate fastidious criticism. He goes on to give a description of the girl on the farm in winter, spring, summer, and autumn. The description of the spring work is fine; the subject is ploughing. It is very hard to plough perfectly, unless you have been brought up to the work from a child. Prizes for straight ploughing used to be given in different parts of the country; perhaps they are still given, but the introduction of steam ploughing machinery from America is

very likely to do away with hand ploughing in the course of time. If that day comes, a description of ploughing like this will be remembered and read with a pleasure somewhat like that which we feel when we read in Virgil accounts of the work done upon old Roman farms:

Well can our Dorothy plough – as a girl, she learnt it and loved it;
  Leading the teams, at first, follow'd by Master himself;
Then, when she grew to the height and the strength of a muscular woman,
  Grasping the stilts in her pride, driving the mighty machine.
Ah, what a joy for her, at early morn, in the springtime,
  Driving from hedge to hedge furrows as straight as a line!
Seeing the crisp brown earth, like waves at the bow of a vessel,
  Rise, curl over, and fall, under the thrust of the share;
Orderly falling and still, its edges all creamy and crumbling,
  But, on the sloping side, polish'd and purple as steel;
Till all the field, she thought, looked bright as the bars of that gridiron
  In the great window at church, over the gentlefolks' pew:
And evermore, as she strode, she has cheerful companions behind her;
  Rooks and smaller birds, following after her plough;
And, ere the ridges were done, there was gossamer woven above them,
  Gossamer dewy and white, shining like foam on the sea.

Of descriptions like these there are not many, for the subject of the poem is the description of character rather than of hills and fields, and descriptions of character are better given through the words and actions of a person than in any other way. So a large proportion of the poem is simply a narrative of acts, mingled with a record of colloquial speech. Still I may quote you a few lines about a sunset:

Well, there was something to see; for the sun was setting in glory,
  Glowing through marvellous clouds, molten, suffused, with his light;
Clouds all rosy above, like the snows of an Alpine sunset,
  But in the heart of their snow thrill'd with a cavernous fire;
Clouds that were couch'd superb in a blaze of opal and em'rald,
  Haunting the clear cool sky, lucid and lovely and blue.

The quotations will show the very considerable power of art which the poet possesses and can use at will. But

the art of showing the beauty and charm of a simple character is much more difficult than the painting of clouds, and this also the poet has done. He traces for us the life of the girl up to the time of her wedding, and the object of the whole work is certainly, in no small degree, the praise of honest labour that strengthens the body and keeps the mind pure. Why discourage women from labours in the fields, he asks, since such work is good both for the body and for the mind; and the women capable of such work become the mothers of the strong and steady men that make up the force of a country. It is not, he reminds us, the sickly and delicate girls working in factories or in shops, who are likely to be the mothers of the best men.

Probably this poem of Mr. Munby's had very little effect in checking the course of things, and probably the agricultural population of England must disappear. The whole country is becoming divided into nothing but manufacturing districts or ornamental estates. It does not pay to grow corn or wheat nor even to raise cattle and sheep in England. It is cheaper to buy such things from abroad. So the farming population is disappearing. The best men and women go to other countries—Canada, America, Australia; the weaker part of the peasant population drift into factory life. These things cannot be helped. But the poet has preserved for us a fine picture of this fine peasant life, which will be read when the peasant life itself has passed from England. The book suggests or ought to suggest a good deal to lovers of literature in other countries than England, especially the fact that peasant life is a subject for poetry; and that the poet able to perceive its relation to the moral and physical well-being of a nation has a great opportunity before him.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A POEM BY LORD HOUGHTON

AMONG many English noblemen who have figured in Victorian literature with more or less credit to themselves, there was perhaps nobody who could write more hauntingly at times than Lord Houghton. He did not write a great deal, but a considerable proportion of the few pieces which he did write have found their way into anthologies, and are likely to stay there. I shall quote and comment upon only one of these, which I think to be the best—not, perhaps, as mere verse, but as a bit of emotional thinking. The subject is a curious one, a subject which has driven some men almost mad. It was this subject which especially tormented the matchless French story-teller, Guy de Maupassant, shortly before he lost his reason; and he wrote a terrible essay about it. Very young men never think of the matter at all, but few men of intelligence reach middle life without having thought about it. I mean this fact,—that no one human being can ever really understand another human being. We think we know a great deal about our friends, or about our enemies—at least we think so while we are young. But later on we discover that there are depths or abysses in every human character, which we cannot know anything about. A character is really like the sea. When we look at the sea we observe only the surface,—the changes of colour, the motion of waves and the foam. When we look at our friends it is really much the same; we can see the surface only, the mood of the moment, the aspect of kindness or gratitude or sympathy passing over that other life as waves or colours play over the surface of the water. But the profundities are beyond our vision. Really the father does not

know his child, nor the husband his wife, nor the wife her husband. There is always a something hidden in the frankest child which the most loving mother cannot discern. Naturally it must be so, because every individual has something of the infinite within him; because also the feelings and tendencies of millions and millions of past lives are stored up in every present life. When you come to think about it, either from the scientific point of view or from the purely metaphysical point of view, you will perceive that it could not be otherwise. But the first time that a man learns this fact, it comes like a great shock to him. It is really a very terrible thing, and requires a little philosophical coolness to consider it. Here is what Lord Houghton said about it:

STRANGERS YET

Strangers yet!
After years of life together,
After fair and stormy weather,
After travel in far lands,
After touch of wedded hands,—
Why thus join'd? Why ever met,
If they must be strangers yet?

Strangers yet!
After childhood's winning ways,
After care and blame and praise,
Counsel ask'd and wisdom given,
After mutual prayers to Heaven,
Child and parent scarce regret
When they part—are strangers yet

Strangers yet!
After strife for common ends—
After title of 'old friends,'
After passions fierce and tender,
After cheerful self-surrender,
Hearts may beat and eyes be met,
And the souls be strangers yet.

Strangers yet!
Oh! the bitter thought to scan
All the loneliness of man:—
Nature, by magnetic laws,
Circle unto circle draws,
But they only touch when met,
Never mingle—strangers yet.

The comparison of each life to a complete circle or sphere, which may touch another sphere but never penetrate it, is not new, but it is used here with great force. This problem is the same thing to which of later years French psychologists have been giving so much attention under the title of Multiple Personality. It is not that there is really a hidden man within the man; it is that every personality is extraordinarily complex and that this complexity is perpetually changing, so that the individual is not really the same at all times and places in his relation to other individuals. Viewed scientifically, the fact seems to be a natural result of evolution, but that does not make it less wonderful, nor, in a certain sense, less awful.

This is the best poem that Lord Houghton ever wrote in his long life, and he wrote a great deal of fairly good poetry. But he wrote nothing else quite so good as this; it has that rare quality which appeals to universal human experience. I often fancy that the condition of his own life must have been particularly likely to inspire him with reflections upon this subject. He lived really a double existence; but the principal part of his life was given—like that of another remarkable English nobleman, the younger Lord Lytton—to diplomacy, an occupation which certainly keeps minds out of sympathy with each other. He was born in 1809, and died in 1885. After leaving the university he almost immediately entered public life, became within a few years a Member of Parliament, and remained a prominent figure in politics for more than a generation. He was known only as Richard Monckton Milnes before he was raised to the peerage. You would scarcely suppose that such a man

could have found time to devote to poetry and song. But he was really double-natured. He had a great vein of sentiment, and such a love of literature that he sought out and made friends with almost every literary person of the time. At Cambridge he had been the friend of Tennyson and Hallam and other brilliant men, but these acquaintances among the aristocracy of literature did not have the effect of making him at all exclusive. Even while a distinguished statesman, he would go out of his way to find some poor student poet and offer his friendship and assistance. Thus he became the helper of many struggling geniuses, and was looked up to by hundreds of young men with gratitude and esteem. However, once outside of the literary circle, the man was hard and cold as steel, keen as the edge of a sword. Had it been otherwise he could not have fulfilled the double duties of his life. And yet perhaps it was owing to this very fact—that he had to be one person in his literary friendship and a totally different person in his diplomatic and political sphere of action—that he began to feel at last that weird lonesomeness which inspired his little poem "Strangers Yet."

CHAPTER XXXVII

TWO MYSTICAL ROSE POEMS

NOT only because certain flower poems have great symbolic value in the literature of the past, both religious and profane, but also because at the present time a great deal of this kind of poetry is being produced, I think it will do well to give you one or two examples. The examples are of the highest class: they are also decidedly difficult. But you know that *the rule in mystical poetry is suggestiveness.* The object is to leave the thought or image sufficiently vague to set curiosity and wonder on the path of inquiry. What does it mean?—that is the question to which the author wants the reader to find out an answer for himself.

Now if we can take two different meanings or more out of the poem, so much the better. If we can never be quite sure about the whole, but only about a part, then again the result may be, from a poetical point of view, very good—because the imagination always remains unsatisfied. The latter variety of poems is the best exemplified, I think, by Browning's "Women and Roses." In other cases I usually give the poem first and then the explanation. But in this case I think it is better to give the explanation first—so far as it can be given.

The poet describes a dream; and the whole impossible, but beautiful imagery remains dreamlike, vague, shifting. He dreams of a rose tree, with three beautiful roses upon it. These roses are not in a line upon the tree, but one above another. The lowermost is faded and dead; the next is beautiful, full and fresh. The uppermost is in the bud stage. —Perhaps *this tree means the tree of life,* a kind of Yggdrasil; but one cannot be sure.

Round the tree, round the flowers, swims and hovers a shining circle of beautiful shapes—shapes of women. It is an immense circle, containing numberless shapes—like those great circlings of ghosts that you see in Doré's pictures of Dante's "Inferno."

Looking at these figures, the poet recognizes at least their signification. These shapes of women are the shapes of all the women that ever have been famous for beauty and charm—all the great women of the past;—followed by all the wonderful women of the present;—together with all the women of the future—all beautiful women not yet born. First, by and by the figures of the past; then the present, then the future. And the poet asks himself which shall he prefer.

The poem is divided into three parts—each describing one of the three roses, and the effect produced upon the gazer by the phantoms circling about that particular rose.

The question of the poem is not answered—perhaps it could not be answered. Perhaps that is the very reason why the poem haunts us so much. I imagine that the poem is intended especially to suggest the eternal charm of beauty; —but there are many kinds of beauty described or suggested moral as well as physical. *The reader, of course, has to ask the question whether it is really possible for us to prefer the best things of one age or period, to the best of another.* And the answer must be NO. The best of the past, moral and physical, was the best product that could have existed in the past; *it was suited to that age, not to any other.* So with the present. The moral value with the present as well as the beauty with the present depend upon present relation —upon the adaptability of each to each. Finally, we are never tired of reading and thinking and dreaming about the florious humanity that is to be—the men and women, of millions to come, as Tennyson would say, who are to be so much wiser and fairer than any of those who lived before them. But if such beings existed to-day, by some miracle—if it were possible to behold, in our own time, creatures

represented as perfected humanity, we should find ourselves unable to appreciate them. They would not be adapted to present conditions;—they would not be suited to the world as it now is. Certainly this poem gives us a great many things to think about.

WOMEN AND ROSES

I

I dream of a red-rose tree.
And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me?

II

Round and round, like a dance of snow
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
Floating the women faded for ages,
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
Then follow women fresh and gay,
Living and loving and loved to-day,
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
Beauties unborn. And all, to one cadence,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached:
Bees pass it unimpeached.

IV

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time!
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you?
Oh, to possess and be possessed!
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast!
But once of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink once and die!—In vain, the same fashion.
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

The first part is very plain, needs no explanation or

commentary. But the last stanzas need interpretation: The difficulty really begins at the fourth and this difficulty is altogether owing to Browning's extraordinary composition of style, in which verbs, prepositions, and nouns are supressed at will, and in which a single word is often made to convey the meaning of half a dozen.

The three lines describing the rose refer to the beauty of the past, as expressed by that symbol. By "term" means the blossoming term;—and the word "unimpeached" refers to "it" (the flower), not to the bees. Here the word "unimpeached" means unchallenged, therefore unvisited.

But the hard part begins, in the third line of number four. The poet cries out to the shapes of the beautiful women of dead Greece and Rome, the women of the ancient poets. "How can I *fix* you, *fire* you, *freeze* you?" What does he mean? He is simply making use of a sculptor's technical language. "To fix" in the artistic sense means to embody by means of a statue or engraving or other work of art. The verb "to fire" refers to the firing of a figure in clay. The *clay* must be fired to make it hard;—the bronze or gold must be melted by fire to make the statue. "Freeze" is a term of which poets are very fond—using it in such expressions as, to freeze in stone, as water takes shape only when turned into ice, so the ideal of the artist takes shape only when it is, poetically speaking, congealed or frozen into stone of the substance of the statue. So the line simply means "O that I had power to represent you through the medium of art!" But he wishes for more than that in the next line. It is the wish of force for element —the longing of the artist for a miracle that would give you back the beauty that vanished thousands of years ago. The fifth line is very much compressed: the thought is "Oh were it possible for human hearts to beat within those beautiful bosoms of stone!" And that is the wish of Pygmalion, the old Greek sculptor who made the statue of a woman so beautiful, that he himself fell in love with it, and prayed the gods to make it alive, which the gods did. There was always something unhappy, however, as a consequence of

these miracles: suppose, then, that the poet could have his wish—would it not mean misfortune or death? What matter? he cries, such love would be cheap at the cost of life. However, he speaks to the past in vain: the ghost does not come back;—the spirits circling around the tree will not visit him. And he turns to the rose of the present:

V

Dear rose, thy joy 's undimmed;
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

VI

Deep as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips!
. . . .
Girdle me once! But no—in their old measure
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

The rose of the present is fair. If the past is out of reach, shall we not prefer the present? Can not one plunge to love, real love, as a bee plunges into a flower? Will not it be possible, through union with the living woman to satiate the longing for the ideal woman—can not the illusion of the impossible be broken? No,—beauty is something that charms beyond all that is possible: the ideal in itself is divine,—is something above all passion,—is something above all self. The shapes of the present pay no more attention to the prayers of the dream than did the ghost of the past. Neither does he know which to admire most.

And he turns to the rose of the future:

VII

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud 's the babe unborn:
First streak of a new morn.

VIII

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear!
What 's far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our own flesh moulders
What shall arrive with the cycle's change?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,
Shaped her to his mind!—Alas! in like manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

Here the language is not difficult. But the thought is. When we think of the beauty that is to be there is nothing to appeal to our senses—nothing that belongs to our experience. We can imagine only a moral beauty—cold and clear. When the poet says "Lend me wings for the cold and clear" he is using the very old simile for the zone of intellectual and moral beauty. As we mount higher in the moral and intellectual atmosphere the colder it becomes—i.e., there is less and less of the sensuous in our nature: just as when ascending a mountain or rising in a balloon the air becomes clearer and colder. *So the suggestion is that the ideal of the future is higher than anything in the present or the past. But after all the future is just as unattainable as is the past.* The spirits of the future pay no heed to the poet—and continue their fairy dance.

You must try to remember that the three little pictures above given only represent three ideals in the poet's mind—first, the ideal charm of the past, the romance of the artist; —secondly, the ideal of the present, the ideal woman whom every young man wishes for but never finds—the woman never to be known, as the French poet Baudelaire called her;—thirdly the unattainable ideal of future perfection—what we can only dream about but never really conceive. All ideals are unattainable, because they represent the impossible. And it is by wishing for impossible things that we really climb to higher things. It is a very hard poem; but it makes us think a good deal; and there is the value of it.

Now for something much simpler, though deep enough in another way. It is called—"The Rose of the World."

THE ROSE OF THE WORLD

Who dreamed that beauty passes like a dream?
  For these red lips with all their mournful pride,
  Mournful that no new wonder may betide,
Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam,
  And Usna's children died.

We and the laboring world are passing by:—
  Amid men's souls that day by day gives place,
  More fleeting than the sea's foam-fickle face,
Under the passing star, foam of the sky,
  Lives on this lonely face.

Bow down, archangels, in your dim abode:
  Before ye were or any hearts to beat,
  Weary and kind, one stood beside His seat;
He made the world, to be a grassy road
  Before her wandering feet.

W. Yeats

The allusions in the first stanza are to Helen of Troy and to a famous heroine of Celtic legend Deirdre; but these allusions only refer to the power exerted by the ideal of beauty in human history. *The Rose of the World simply means Ideal Beauty.* Think how many changes have occurred, the poet says, since the time of Helen of Troy—yet in the imaginations of all men the shadow of that face remains. In the last stanza we are told that highest beauty existed even before the unvierse existed. Ideal Beauty was really made by God and the world was created only for beauty's sake. This poem has also the value of suggestiveness.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

METEMPSYCHOSIS IN MODERN VERSE

As we have a few more hours for this class of lectures, I shall devote that time to slight studies upon some unfamiliar but interesting phases of poetical literature. To-day I want to call your attention to the subject of metempsychosis in modern verse. There is very little nineteenth century poetry on this subject, and still less of poetry of a high order. Of course there are a number of very fine poems dealing with superindividual memory—organic memory of former lives;—and you have noticed poetry of this kind in Rossetti, in Swinburne, and in others: also you may remember a beautiful little poem by Alice Meynell which I dictated to you the year before last, entitled "The Modern Poet." But the true idea of metempsychosis,—the idea that a soul may pass, not merely from one human body to another, but from a human body into other shapes of being, animal or vegetable,—that is very rare in good English poetry. We have, however, some examples; and I want to call your attention to one of them which is by an Englishman of considerable reputation in the world of letters. It is entitled "The White Moth;" and I think it should be interesting to you because of some analogy which it offers with a few Japanese poems on the same subject. Of course the treatment is altogether different; we have here almost the light tone of society verse. But the fundamental notion is very seldom utilized by our poets—although it is as old as Plato.

If a leaf rustled, she would start:
And yet she died, a year ago.
How had so frail a thing the heart

To journey where she trembled so?
And do they turn and turn in fright,
Those little feet, in so much night?

The reason why the first verse is put in italics is that it represents a manuscript form on which the hero of the story is engaged. He has just been writing a poem about his dead wife, and has just finished this verse of it when his dead wife returns to him in the form of a night butterfly, as we shall see in the next verse.

The light above the poet's head
  Streamed on the page and on the cloth,
And twice and thrice there buffeted
  On the black pane a white-winged moth:
'T was Annie's soul that beat outside
  And "Open, open, open!" cried:

"I could not find the way to God;
  There were too many flaming suns
For signposts, and the fearful road
  Led over wastes where millions
Of tangled comets hissed and burned—
  I was bewildered and I turned.

"O, it was easy then! I knew
  Your window and no star beside.
Look up, and take me back to you!"
  —He rose and thrust the window wide.
'T was but because his brain was hot
  With rhyming; for he heard her not.

But poets polishing a phrase
  Show anger over trivial things;
And as she blundered in the blaze
  Towards him, on ecstatic wings,
He raised a hand and smote her dead;
  Then wrote "*That I had died instead!*"

This little thing is pretty and light in itself almost as a

butterfly: and although the pathos is only half serious, it stays in the mind and thrills there long after the poem has been read—which is a sign of power. The author's name is Quiller-Couch.

CHAPTER XXXIX

NOTE UPON HOOD'S "HAUNTED HOUSE"

THE other day when we came to treat of Hood's work, I promised at some later time to read you parts of "The Haunted House"—as being the best poem of its kind in the English language. We have now leisure enough for some words about it; and I want to tell you first of all why it is such a good poem. It has the very great defect of being too long; but in spite of that it is a marvellous thing, and cannot be spoiled by that shortcoming.

There are two ways—at least two chief ways—of producing in poetry that peculiar creepy chill or thrill which we call ghostly fear. One direct and almost objective way is by describing a supernatural apparition, by painting or drawing a ghost or spectre in such a way as to produce fear. But in this modern and skeptical age, such a method can only succeed when a very extraordinary genius attempts it. I can best explain my meaning by referring to pictures. Most pictures of dreadful things imagined we can laugh at when we do not believe in ghosts. But the pictures of spectres drawn by such a genius as Gustave Doré make us afraid whether we believe in ghosts or not; and a curious fact is that he himself became afraid of his own pictures and dared not sleep in a room by himself, because the figures which he drew began to haunt him. Yet he would have laughed at the idea that ghosts really appear. The fear of his work is entirely due to the fact that the figures in it give us the memory and the sensation of a bad dream. In poetry, effects of this kind can be produced; but only the very greatest poets are capable of causing fear by the objective method. The other method which we may call a subjective

method is to produce the fear simply by creating in imagination the same condition in which fear and suspicion is likely to be felt,—and this without describing any ghost at all. Certain aspects of gloomy weather, fearful sunsets, strange shadowings, unaccustomed silences—these things have their effect even upon the most skeptical mind. So do very lonesome places—signs of desertion, signs of moulding and decay where life once rejoiced and laughed. Well, the method of Hood's poem is this. He takes us into an old deserted house, and there, merely by telling us to look at the conditions of the rooms and the gardens, he produces a feeling of cold fear.

First we have a glimpse of a house and the garden from outside—the poet does not tell us where or when he saw that; and the vagueness of the introduction helps the effect.

> Some dreams we have are nothing else but dreams,
> Unnatural, and full of contradictions;
> Yet others of our most romantic schemes
> Are something more than fictions.
>
> It might be only on enchanted ground;
> It might be merely by a thought's expansion;
> But in the spirit, or the flesh, I found
> An old deserted Mansion.
>
> A residence for woman, child, and man,
> A dwelling-place,—and yet no habitation;
> A House,—but under some prodigious ban
> Of excommunication.
>
> . . . .
>
> No dog was at the threshold, great or small;
> No pigeon on the roof—no household creature—
> No cat demurely dozing on the wall—
> Not one domestic feature.
>
> . . . .
>
> With shutter'd panes the grassy court was starr'd;
> The time-worn coping-stone had tumbled after!
> And thro' the rugged roof the sky shone, barr'd
> With naked beam and rafter.

O'er all there hung a shadow and a fear;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is Haunted!

By "a thought's expansion" the poet means probably the peculiar magnification or prolongation of a fancy in dreams; and the phrase "enchanted ground" only refers to imagination. We often speak of the enchanted land of Fancy. "Excommunication" usually signifies a religious curse—especially the anathema of the church, by which the offending person is cast out from the religious body, and condemned to solitude, the faithful being forbidden to speak to him or to help him in any way. But the word can be otherwise used, and is very well used here, implying the solitude of the place, which has no communication with the rest of the world. The description of the garden is very impressive; but it would not be so to you, unless you have seen old-fashioned English gardens, and were familiar with the different trees, plants, weeds, and flowers minutely described. So I will abreviate this description, quoting only a very few stanzas.

The flow'r grew wild and rankly as the weed,
Roses with thistles struggled for espial,
And vagrant plants of parasitic breed
Had overgrown the Dial.

. . . .

The beds were all untouch'd by hand or tool;
No footstep mark'd the damp and mossy gravel,
Each walk as green as is the mantled pool,
For want of human travel.

The vine unprun'd, and the neglected peach,
Droop'd from the wall with which they used to grapple;
And on the canker'd tree, in easy reach,
Rotted the golden apple.

. . . .

The pear and quince lay squander'd on the grass;
The mould was purple with unheeded showers

Of bloomy plums—a Wilderness it was
Of fruits, and weeds, and flowers!

. . . .

The Fountain was a-dry—neglect and time
Had marr'd the work of artisan and mason,
And efts and croaking frogs, begot of slime,
Sprawl'd in the ruin'd bason.

In the first line of the above quotation the word "rankly" refers to rough, wild growth. In a garden which has been neglected for a long time cultivated plants will assume wild characteristics. For instance I remember visiting in America the garden of a very rich planter who had been a great lover of roses; and he had imported many beautiful roses from all parts of the world to plant them in his garden. All of these had become wild again; the double flowers had become single, and the artificially produced colours had disappeared. In most of the old-fashioned English gardens there used to be a dial, or sun-dial—it was an indispensable part of the garden scenery. The spaces of soft clay in such gardens, where the choice flowers are cultivated, are called "beds;" and the paths are called "walks." These paths are usually strewn with grass, but have to be carefully weeded. The expression "mantled pool" here means a space of stagnant water, an old pond, so covered with green water plants that the water itself is concealed. You know that the green which mantles or covers such old ponds is usually a very bright green. The next stanza, the reference to the peach and vine "grappling with the wall" alludes to the English custom of training these trees to grow against a wall exposed to the south; and the branches of the trees are fastened to the wall with cords and nails. The word "canker'd," referring to a kind of dry-rot, is much more commonly used of weeds and flowers than of trees; but it is so much the more expressive in this case. "Bloomy plums" is probably an expression with which you are not familiar. On the surface of purple grapes or purple plants there is a fine white powder that looks like mould; and when this be-

comes somewhat thick, it is a sign that the fruit is ripe. "Bloomy" here signifies "covered with *bloom*"—that is the name given to the white growth on the surface of the ripe fruit. Again, efts are small lizards—the name is often given to the water newt, called in Japanese *imori*; and the word "sprawl'd" signifying to fall or lie flat with arms and legs widely spread out, is very expressive of the attitude of amphibious reptiles on a smooth surface.

So much for the outside appearance. On entering the house the appearances are much worse; and the first effect of pushing the door open is to frighten away a host of insects. The door itself, even outside, had been for years in possession of spiders and centipedes.

> The centipede along the threshold crept,
> The cobweb hung across in mazy tangle,
> And in its winding-sheet the maggot slept,
> At every nook and angle.
>
> The keyhole lodged earwig and her brood,
> The emmets of the steps had old possession,
> And march'd in search of their diurnal food
> In undisturb'd procession.
>
> . . . .
>
> Howbeit, the door I push'd—or so I dreamed—
> Which slowly, slowly gaped,—the hinges creaking
> With such a rusty eloquence, it seem'd
> That Time himself was speaking.
>
> . . . .
>
> The startled bats flew out—bird after bird—
> The screech-owl overhead began to flutter,
> And seem'd to mock the cry that she had heard
> Some dying victim utter!
>
> . . . .
>
> The wood-louse dropp'd, and roll'd into a ball,
> Touch'd by some impulse occult or mechanic;
> And nameless beetles ran along the wall
> In universal panic.
>
> The subtle spider, that from overhead
> Hung like a spy on human guilt and error,

Suddenly turn'd, and up its slender thread
Ran with a nimble terror.

. . . .

If but a rat had linger'd in the house,
To lure the thought into a social channel!
But not a rat remain'd or tiny mouse,
To squeak behind the panel.

. . . .

The floor was redolent of mould and must,
The fungus in the rotten seams had quicken'd;
While on the oaken table coats of dust
Perennially had thicken'd.

. . . .

There was so foul a rumour in the air,
The shadow of a Presence so atrocious;
No human creature could have feasted there,
Even the most ferocious.

"Maggot" does not mean maggot in the strict sense of the word; but in England the little grubs of the moth which eat carpets, silk hangings, clothing, etc., are called maggots. They make little chrysalides in the corners of the rooms and doorways—little chrysalides of thread, here called by the poet their "winding sheets" or shrouds. The word "emmets" is still used in England for ants, but is seldom heard in America. The "earwig" is a little creature shaped somewhat like a long beetle, and, having a pincers in its tail, owes its name to the belief that it is fond of getting into peoples' ears. Children are very much afraid of it. The stanza about the wood-louse is famous. In the second line the word "occult" has the sense of ghostly as well as viewless; indeed the word always combines both meanings in poetry. "Must" is a popular name for a particular kind of mould; and the word "seams" in the second line of the same stanza signifies the space between the planks of the floor. "Coats of dust" is a very English expression, the word "coat" here only means layer.

In the above quotation I have been obliged to leave out a number of striking verses—describing the fireplace as in-

habited by lizards and toads—also describing the appearance of the walls, and the noise of the wind in the broken windows. But the stanzas given are very effective and sufficiently suggest the remainder. However, we are only on the ground floor. The next thing to do is to go upstairs:—

> 'Tis hard for human actions to account,
> Whether from reason or from impulse only—
> But some internal prompting bade me mount
> The gloomy stairs and lonely.
>
> . . . .
>
> Those dreary stairs, where with the sounding stress
> Of ev'ry step so many echoes blended,
> The mind, with dark misgivings, fear'd to guess
> How many feet ascended.

Have you never had this weird sensation? I think we have all experienced it. Often in climbing up an old staircase, alone at night, the cracking of the stairs behind you sounds exactly as if somebody was following. Of course we only notice this as a curious thing if we are not superstitious. But children and people easily frightened by ghost stories, always find a particular terror in creaking stairways. The merit of the stanza—the second of those quoted—lies in its remarkable compactness. A great many things are suggested by four lines. Paraphrased, the thought would require a good many words: "On those lonesome stairs, the noisy pressure of every footstep awakened so many strange echoes that one felt startled, and suspected that he heard feet climbing behind him, but was afraid either to look back or to think about it." That is the real meaning conveyed.

Here we may leave the subject. You cannot at a glance perceive the real impressiveness of the quotation to-day given, but if you will read them over some other time,—especially after dark in a lonely place,—I think you will find them very powerful and that the effect may tempt you to study a little more of Hood's particular method in treating weird subjects.

CHAPTER XL

A FEW EXAMPLES OF LIGHT VERSE

IN the course of these lectures I have often used the expression "Light Verse." But I am not sure whether you quite understand the general term which, I must acknowledge, although technical, is also quite vague. For this reason, I want to conclude this course of lectures with a few examples that will serve to illustrate the expression.

Light verse means, of course, verse which is not of the serious kind; but it does not necessarily mean comic verse. As a general term it only means any kind of verse that is not essentially serious: it may touch us deeply; it may also make us laugh. However, no matter how serious a subject be suggested by light verse, the tone should always be cheerful and pleasant,—should make you think of a smiling face. There is the general outline for you;—now let us go into particulars.

There are many kinds of light verse,—ranging from almost purely comic up to, or down to, something bordering upon the tragic. All light verse ought to be artistic—otherwise it has scarcely an excuse for existence. A great deal of it is artistic; and a great deal of it deals with art-subjects. Here is an example:—

OF A TOYOKUNI COLOUR-PRINT

Was I a Samurai renowned,
Two-sworded, fierce, immense of bow?
A historian angular and profound?
A priest? a porter?—Child, although
I have forgotten clean, I know
That in the shape of Fujisan,

What time the cherry-orchards blow,
I loved you once in old Japan.

As here you loiter, flowing-gowned
And hugely sashed, with pins a-row
Your quaint head as with flamelets crowned,
Demure, inviting—even so,
When merry maids in Miyako
To feel the sweet o' the year began,
And green gardens to overflow,
I loved you once in old Japan.

Clear shine the hills; the rice-fields round
Two cranes are circling; sleepy and slow,
A blue canal the lake's blue bound
Breaks at the bamboo bridge; and lo!
Touched with the sundown's spirit and glow,
I see you turn, with flirted fan,
Against the plum-tree's bloomy snow. . . .
I loved you once in old Japan!

Envoy

Dear, 'twas a dozen lives ago;
But that I was a lucky man
The Toyokuni here will show:
I loved you—once—in old Japan.

This little address to a Japanese picture is by Mr. W. E. Henley who has published several volumes of poetry, and who now has a considerable influence in the circle of English letters. He is not a first-class poet; but he has written some pretty things (of which this is one) and some curious things of which his series of poems describing the life of a patient in a London Hospital deserves mention. You will see that this is very light verse in the full meaning of the word—though it makes us think of some pretty things, which is very close to the border line of the serious;—of course there are some lines in it, which seem a little strange to a Japanese; nor can it be said the artist fully understood the picture which he so much admired. But in the third stanza,

he really gives us the colour of the print, and the charming effect of the slight figure standing against a background white with plum blossoms. This is called the ballade form (which you must not confuse with ballad) which is a French form of verse. There should be three stanzas of eight lines each with a burden at the end of each stanza and the whole should end with a quatrain of four lines. Most of the later English poets have written in this form; it was made first popular by Austin Dobson, and since then almost everybody attempts it.

But all light verse is by no means so light as this: I took a strong example merely to introduce the subject. Here is a poem which, although essentially light verse, touches us. The author is Thackeray, and the subject is the thoughts of a lover watching at a church door for the chance of seeing the girl that he loves pass by. There is prettiness here too, if you like; but it is not of the trifling kind. The title of the poem is "At the Church Gate."

Although I enter not,
Yet round about the spot
    Ofttimes I hover;
And near the sacred gate,
With longing eyes I wait,
    Expectant of her.

The minster bell tolls out
Above the city's rout,
    And noise and humming;
They 've hush'd the minster bell:
The organ 'gins to swell;
    She 's coming, she 's coming!

My lady comes at last,
Timid and stepping fast
    And hastening thither,
With modest eyes downcast;
She comes—she 's here, she 's past!
    May heaven go with her!

Kneel undisturb'd, fair saint!
Pour out your praise or plaint
    Meekly and duly;
I will not enter there,
To sully your pure prayer
    With thoughts unruly.

But suffer me to pace
Round the forbidden place,
    Lingering a minute,
Like outcast spirits, who wait,
And see, through heaven's gate,
    Angels within it.

The charm of this poem is in the real emotion suggested but not expressed. The poet feels, by contrast with the pure innocence of the young girl—innocence as of a child,—his own unworthiness; and while mocking himself in a gentle way, he lets us understand his real sentiment. This is the art of what is called "Society Verse."

But light verse may be altogether comic,—purely funny. Here is a famous example,—one of the most famous in English literature. The authorship was never acknowledged; but it is supposed to have been the work of George Canning, who wrote a great many other funny things in a paper called "The Anti-Jacobin:"

Whene'er with haggard eyes I view
  This dungeon, that I'm rotting in,
I think of those companions true
Who studied with me in the U-
        -niversity of Göttingen—
        -niversity of Göttingen.

Sweet 'kerchief check'd with heavenly blue,
  Which once my love sat knotting in,
Alas, Matilda then was true,
At least I thought so at the U-
        -niversity of Göttingen—
        -niversity of Göttingen.

Barbs! barbs! alas! how swift ye flew,
  Her neat post-waggon trotting in!
Ye bore Matilda from my view;
Forlorn I languish'd at the U-
      -niversity of Göttingen—
      -niversity of Göttingen.

This faded form! this pallid hue!
  This blood my veins is clotting in,
My years are many—they were few
When first I enter'd at the U-
      -niversity of Göttingen—
      -niversity of Göttingen.

There first for thee my passion grew,
  Sweet! sweet Matilda Pottingen!
Thou wast the daughter of my tu-
-tor, Law Professor at the U-
      -niversity of Göttingen—
      -niversity of Göttingen.

Sun, moon, and thou vain world, adieu,
  That kings and priests are plotting in;
Here doom'd to starve on water-gru-
-el, never shall I see the U-
      -niversity of Göttingen!—
      -niversity of Göttingen!

This is called, or was called, when it first appeared, "The Song of Rogero," because it figured in a kind of ironical drama. But, since it became famous, the original name has been quite forgotten; and the composition is more generally known as Canning's song about the University of Gottingen. Remember, it is not quite certain that Canning wrote it; it might have been work of his friend Frere. Of course, beside the fun of the thing, the ingenuity of the rhymes has helped to give it celebrity.

Let me now offer an example of light verse upon a serious subject, "The Unrealized Ideal." It is by Frederick Locker,—perhaps the greatest of all English writers of this

kind of verse. You will find it pretty; but it will also give you something to think about:—

My only Love is always near,—
  In country or in town
I see her twinkling feet, I hear
  The whisper of her gown.

She foots it ever fair and young,
  Her locks are tied in haste,
And one is o'er her shoulder flung,
  And hangs below her waist.

She ran before me in the meads;
  And down this world-worn track
She leads me on; but while she leads
  She never gazes back.

And yet her voice is in my dreams,
  To witch me more and more,
That wooing voice! Ah me, it seems
  Less near me than of yore.

Lightly I sped when hope was high,
  And youth beguiled the chase;
I follow—follow still; but I
  Shall never see her Face.

Of course I need not tell you that no woman is referred to, —the emblematic people may mean any beautiful idea, any beautiful conception of right or truth that a young man wishes to realize. No man ever quite realizes his ideal; and the older he grows the further away that ideal seems. It is as if he were following a guide, a figure that never suffers her face to be seen. This light verse comes very close to purely serious verse; and yet it does not cross the line.

The most serious poets have occasionally indulged in light verse. There is no more serious poet than Cowper; but Cowper has written many pleasing examples of light verse. Here is an examples of light verse, entitled "The

Jackdaw." The jackdaw is only a kind of crow; and this is a poem which might as well refer to a Japanese crow as to any other kind of crow.

There is a bird, who by his coat,
And by the hoarseness of his note,
  Might be supposed a crow;
A great frequenter of the church,
Where bishop-like he finds a perch,
  And dormitory too.

Above the steeple shines a plate,
That turns and turns, to indicate
  From what point blows the weather:
Look up—your brains begin to swim,
'Tis in the clouds—that pleases him,
  He chooses it the rather.

Fond of the speculative height,
Thither he wings his airy flight,
  And thence securely sees
The bustle and the rareeshow
That occupy mankind below,
  Secure and at his ease.

You think, no doubt, he sits and muses
On future broken bones and bruises,
  If he should chance to fall.
No; not a single thought like that
Employs his philosophic pate,
  Or troubles it at all.

He sees that this great roundabout,
The world, with all its motley rout,
  Church, army, physic, law,
Its customs, and its businesses,
Is no concern at all of his,
  And says—what says he?—Caw.

Thrice happy bird! I too have seen
Much of the vanities of men;
  And, sick of having seen 'em,

Would cheerfully these limbs resign
For such a pair of wings as thine,
And such a head between 'em.

The word "roundabout" in the fifth stanza may be new to you: it means a kind of structure, made to turn upon a pivot, like the revolving stage in a Japanese theatre. On this there are either seats or wooden horses, for little children to sit upon; and when they have taken their places, and the structure turns about, they enjoy the pleasure of motion. This comparison of the world to a "roundabout" at a fair is quite in the spirit of Bunyan. On the part of the poet, the desire is to be able to consider the world and all its vexations with the indifference of a crow watching things from the top of the steeple, is morally well enough. The man of letters must try to think and act independently of fashion. But, for the man who has to fight the battle of life in a different way, the philosophy might not be so commendable.

I shall now give one more short example of light verse, —to show you an example of this verse reflecting what is called "the society tone." It is a poem by Locker upon his grandmother's picture, in which she appeared as when a beautiful young girl:—

This Relative of mine
Was she seventy-and-nine
When she died?
By the canvas may be seen
How she look'd at seventeen,
As a Bride.

Beneath a summer tree
Her maiden reverie
Has a charm;
Her ringlets are in taste;
What an arm! and what a waist
For an arm!

With her bridal-wreath, bouquet,
Lace farthingale, and gay,
    Falbala,—
If Romney's touch be true,
What a lucky dog were you,
    Grandpapa!

Her lips are sweet as love;
They are parting! Do they move?
    Are they dumb?
Her eyes are blue, and beam
Beseechingly, and seem
    To say, "Come!"

What funny fancy slips
From atween these cherry lips?
    Whisper me,
Fair Sorceress in paint,
What canon says I mayn't
    Marry thee?

That good-for-nothing Time
Has a confidence sublime!
    When I first
Saw this Lady, in my youth,
Her winters had, forsooth,
    Done their worst.

Her locks, as white as snow,
Once shamed the swartly crow;
    By-and-by
That fowl's avenging sprite
Set his cruel foot for spite
    Near her eye.

Her rounded form was lean,
And her silk was bombazine:
    Well I wot
With her needles would she sit,
And for hours would she knit,—
    Would she not?

Ah perishable clay!
Her charms had dropt away
One by one
But if she heaved a sigh
With a burthen, it was, "Thy
Will be done."

In travail, as in tears,
With the fardel of her years
Overprest,
In mercy she was borne
Where the weary and the worn
Are at rest.

O if you now are there,
And sweet as once you were,
Grandmamma,
This nether world agrees
You'll all the better please
Grandpapa.

Here you have a very interesting mixture of emotion, mockery of emotion, of admiration, and melancholy reflection. The poet obliges you to share his liking for the picture, and to think his thoughts, although he is laughing all the time, and wants you to laugh too,—not to laugh very loud, of course, but just to smile in his company. That is elegant light verse: perhaps the best example that I can offer you.

These examples should enable you to see how wide the range of light verse can be. You have had one philosophical poem of this class, a comic poem, a poet's reflection upon the value of equanimity, and a composition embodying the emotion and the fancies suggested by a family portrait. Also you have had a small example of the use to which such poetry can be put in relation to art-matters. A great deal of English light verse—certainly the majority of it—can scarcely interest you, because it deals so very much with particular aspects of English social life. But there are

numerous exceptions; and I think that you would do well to study some of these, because the Japanese language is particularly well adapted for certain kinds of light verse, and because a great deal of new literary work might be attempted in this direction. No kind of poetry is more essentially aristocratic—no kind of poetry is more sure to find a welcome in cultivated circles. Perhaps you will say that it is not very durable. That is true. You must try to think of it as evanescent,—like the charm of the cherry blossom or plum flower. It is only the delight of a season. Of course we are sorry that the blossoming of flowers lasts only for so short a time,—but who would forego the pleasure of the spectacle merely because it happens to be brief? The poet, too, need not fear to put forth an occasional frail bloom: the beauty of the bloom more than excuses the frailty. (May 22nd, 1902)

THE END

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