Thesis.

The Poet's Mission.

Margaret S. Robbins.
"This speech shall be lyrical and sweet, and universal as the wind of the wind."

The keenest feeling has its story, the bird of lightest wing his song, and man, in a slow, mechanical fashion, at times grandly tells the story of his being, and voices the throbbing, wings of life within him.

In its essential features the mode of expression, called poetry is the most adequate form, because its measured and melodic flow simulates the pulsations of thought and feeling and so most nearly conveys the truth intended. There can mere words without regard to regularity of movement. The strolling step of a company walking on the green awakens no emotion, but a sight of idle pleasure, but let there be the same number in regular rank and file with a drum or pipe to give accent to the movement of the body, for the
hundred feet are at the top of one man and at once there is awakened in our mind a whole train of associations and words and rumors of war that in series before us, a battle scene is pictured, and history repeats all at the tap of a drum or the tread of a martial step. By some such subtle force does rhythmic speech stir the senses and produce strong effects.

In the higher realm of human effort - the expression of ideals, we find a worker who labors through patient years, to embody in stony his conception of beauty in the human form. His thought shall live unaltered through the centuries. Another haunts the hills, the wilds, the sea if happily he may steal the secret of their beauty, their depth. His power to thrill the soul, and he gives his thought his vision in line or color to the eye which can in this nature, read the story of her revelations to him. His thought we prize as a new section of a word of God a word as old as the Day of Creation.
and waiting until now for an interpreter.

And still another is a devoted friend of Nature, and a student of all language science, philosophy, history, art, that he may read and render her meanings. He toils not only in the fields, the workshops, the studios, but is also a digger in mines, a mystic seer, a disciple of Moses and the prophets—an incessant toiler as well as a dreamer of dreams.

Think not his labor is light because he is not a wage-earner. His hours are not measured by the rising and setting of the sun; the stars are often the only watchers over his toils devoted to the world. Day and night call aloud for his self-efforts and hold out the rich grains for his harvesting and the pleasant fruit for his hand.

The plane of the poet's daily walk is above material things. It is in those high tablelands of delights call to the realm of the ideal. His limits are the bounds which knowledge sets to the conqueror of men, and
to words he adds strings when he calls music to his aid.
The material out of which his fashions his glorious creations
may include all created things. Nor lend, like a sated
shrew in midair, drawing life from our common earth
yet drinking heavier dews from silvery cloud-cups, and
out of his "golden bowl" pours fragrant showers, sweet
ened with the breath of his own transforming life.

In the saying of Fletchers of Saltoun I may well
in regard to their difference to all legislation. If only
be he permitted to make the ballads of a nation then
is enough of solid truth to give it enduring vitality. If
this be accepted as wisdom we shall find that the song
writer is an important factor of society, for govern-
ment can do upon public opinion, and he who claims
that opinion wields the government. It is a fact-
that publicists have thundered and teachers have more
their fires away in the vain endeavor to induce men
to accept a belief, until some singer, impassioned, per-
nuaded of man's need of it, sings it into song, and
things it to the breeze, as a banner richly adorned, to be seen and admired of all men. It is not merely the
merely the melody nor the fact alone, but that the
truth is carried to our door by a messenger as sweet
that we are constrained to bid him enter. Many
thoughts precious as molten silver, fashioned by great
thinkers, lie underlaid or unknown or dulled or covered
until some orator or poet in speech or song, unloos
his quiver, and with true and keen-edged cries speaks
They answer home to the hearts of the people where
they search out and destroy by a spiritual chem-
istry the embryo evils which when developed corrode
society.

Let us inquire into the purpose of the poetic art. Is
it to move us to pity or terror, and at the same time to do
to these feelings something which Greek scholars have
never been able to make out as Aristotle said, or is it
simply to please as the average critic seems to believe.
The same it is true, as a purveyor of art, given us that high de-
true of satisfaction which is called aesthetic pleasure, and much more than this. The criterion for art in general is that it shall be beautiful, but of all great works of art how much more than this is true.

That art is high which thrills us with the deepest love for larger life, awakens in us a strong desire for more attainment. Poetry is the highest form of literary art at having the fullest expressive power, and for the intertwining of thought and feeling this form alone is fitted. Music is more intense but art is broad in its effects nor enduring.

Much of our modern verse is mere Song or rhyme, flowing rhythmically, a battle of words, without a vague atmosphere of feeling and without thought, a small path of the requirements of the art, such is the "decorative poetry" of our day.

Illustrate: The rose you describe to me in smooth flowing line, delicately shaded, is only a tale faintly outlined word, picture, thought, very pretty. Now, that
you give me your thought-about it, warmed by a glad feeling, based on this sentiment which is common to man.

You regard this flower. I return you thanks for a real joy as delicate and fresh as the leaf of the rose you gather this morning with the dew upon it.

He who knows love within us those thoughts and emotions which our souls by the long experience, his by choice of theme, one masterful touch awakens as Earlilie response in our joint heart, the secret of his art.

But laughter and tears lie near the surface. The face which glows at a light touch may as quickly pale.

The deeper problem of art is to reach the great emotion powers whose awakening means a fuller existence and a perpetual growth; the profound sense of righteous justice, feelings of reverence and love, not the cost of thing that sentiment aliens have offered with maudlin words, but the love of mother and bond, the love of man and country, and the love of little children and friends; the
soft that had no instance dreams of suicide, but lives for the happiness of its object, or will die to fill the breach, if need be, counting life but a gift to be freely given.

"Every work of art," it has been said, "is the incarnation of man's faith in the perfection of things in their complete or ideal reality, of his agnostic light into that perfection by the prophetic light of the imagination.

The actual holds in itself an ideal that is its true destination, and this ideal is the function of art, to reveal. The artist's eye sees to this the secret of which the natural fact—is the sign and prophecy. The aim of work of art then is not as means to a higher end, but is in itself an end, absolute. It is not a mere recreation, a bit of by-play in life, but—it is a mode of spiritual activity, the lack of which would be an unperfect state of existence. It participates of the nature of man's eternal destiny.

Men of old spoke of the Lord as holy and command...
That he to operate as a prophet; and shall we in this
day of increased enlightenment be less discerning?
All will serve but its proper work in the disciplines of
life until the sense of its sacred character comes once
more into the general judgment and mankind
look upon it as much the renewals have been its master
and interlocutor. Only those influences which are se-
ceived with reverence can enlighten and uplift the
soul to its full measure of height.

As now much-present-some theme wrought out of
the materials of real experience, by force of the ideal,
which, born with them, still points beyond them, and
recognizing their imperfection still shows them to be
tokens at least of perfection. This theme is not simply
rehearsed, but embodied, so that the whole possesses an
increasing interest and gives us continually the
sense of actual life and reality; and in this treatment

its motifs shall enter except the setting it forth in
the form its own nature determines from the cotyledon of
the perfect flower. The essence of all lies in the nearness to the
fection in this intimacy of theme and expression.

The friend must be musical, full of lovely images;
it must call up hopes of high and pure associations
full of suggestiveness. The mind instinctively acknol-
dges its charm from the keeping child to the cage.

The earliest attempt in literature of many nations is
the highest stage of civilization. It is still their most
refined and valued product; through the whole range
of hymns, prayers, cherishes lyrics, and spices.

Memory is a valuable faculty to cultivate. How
much more in the imagination, which uses all her
facts, her possessions to associate with them enwrapping
sentiment and feeling, as a temple is hallowed and
made magnificent with the images of her saints.

The ideals of a nation have more to do with
developing its arts, its education, and its institutions
than anything else. The life of him who attempts to
live without the inspiration of high ideals is a failure. The nation which tends her standard, and turns a deaf ear to the magic watchword of her centurions on the high road, weakens her strength, begins her decadence, and before she is aware of danger she totters and slowly sinks into that obscurity which has swallowed up so many once glorious civilizations. Often we flatter ourselves that we have attained the summit of excellence that there is nothing more for which to strive. There are no inrels greater than our ancient Rome with enemies on every hand; nor three if no pestilence or famine, or sword as fatally destructive to the progress and well-being of a people as the loss of those ideals which are the indwelling of all worthy development and attainment.

It is the province of the poet to do not only this seek the article of the beautiful, lest a Christ appear the honest, giving to the multitude of those who will receive him meaning everlasting of all conditions, the beautiful and blessed truth of life, and the kingdom of the
future. The great poet must be a sufferer, or have the
capacity for suffering. Such truth turns its way to
the heart and flashes out inepic and flume of
lining fire from the diamond-pointed pen. The Song
of Solomon, the Song of David, the Odes of Pindar, the
tragedies of Aeschylus, the dramas of Shakespeare,
the epics of Milton and the heart-songs of many other
poets were written for the world in the tears and
smiles of men who long and suffer.
Poetry is the language of miracles.
By some mysterious process to which it holds the
key, the atoms of air transform themselves into form for man.
The vapors of the earth become the water which keeps
it alive. He sees the miracle, are thrilled with the
wonder of it. The poet knows the secret of the change
and following the bee on his shining ray has learned
even to clove the honey of thought-in scattered cells as he.
urient good for bees, and in his alchemical has dis-
tilled the nectar of life for our mental stimulus.


Those who convey thought by the use of symbols know best how to quicken the intellect; hence poetry, which is preeminently figurative is the most valuable reading.

How rare our lifelike would our literature seem were it to lose the poets from its list of contributors with past and present. But if Homer and Shakespeare were lost from our libraries, the impulse and inspiration they have given would remain; and their most valuable thoughts might be found as precious gems in modern setting - in the works of later writers.

The strongest evidence of the inspiration of all great poets is the impulse they have given to individual minds, as shown in the history of literature and the fine arts.

The Vedas tell us the divine mission and purpose in full consciousness of it. Their great themes were presented in the strongest light, clothed with all the graces of rhetoric. The Vedas and Avesta afford us conceptions as grand as theirs. They have been the inspiration and cheer of thousands, and furnished
It is the office of the poet to inspire. In modern times no writer has awakened in the minds of men the feelings of reverence, of piety, of hope, of delight in beauty which the name of Milton awakens.

It is an interesting question in regard to a poet whether he has left any great poem which shall resist the test of time like the "adamas" of Shakespeare, or remain a classic like Wordsworth's "The Prelude" to Immortality. It seems a more vital point to know whether his thought has entered into the spirit of his day or elevated the idea of man for that and succeeding generations.

Our faith in the intellectual progress of mankind is large enough to believe that from out the accumulates "clouds" of the age will rise still more glorious constellations to lighten every flight of doubt and strife and fear. The golden age which so many mortals seem always in the backvart horizon of their lines, to the poets vioic glimpse beyond the sapphire gatix of the future.