THESIS

The Permanence of the Poetic Art.

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Literature and Science.

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"Poetry can not grow less. Why? Because it can not grow greater." - Victor Hugo.

If I should be asked which of all the finer arts has done the most toward the ethical advancement of mankind, has tended most strongly to raise primitive nature by instilling altruism for individual selfishness, I should answer without hesitation, Poetry. The language of the passions and the imagination, the communicant of the emotions, the connecting link between God's wonders and man's understanding. Painting and sculpture have each their missions. The old masters have wielded a truly wonderful influence over the aspirations of their followers, but theirs is, after all, a
rather narrow sphere. They treat the differentiated language of sculpture and painting alike, as if such refined minds which already have been brought under controlling and elevating influences in the simplest spoken or written form, if sincere in spirit and lofty in tone, there is any appeal to human sympathy, and to definite moral truths which all the painters and sculptors from Giotto to Michael Angelo are panting to call forth. Let the mind seek inspiration in the pictorial arts, and only instruction in literature. Let this be able to conform itself to the caliper of the soul with which it deals, and through its simplicity, touch the simplest heart. But the understanding is not the sole avenue through which the human heart can be
taught. One may appreciate beauty of expression and be affected by it, though lacking power of adequate comprehension.

Generally speaking, we may say, that my poetry lies the imagination, the emotion, the sympathy of recorded language. It is the soul of the great organism of letters. Often has this form of literature been traced from its earliest origins to its present stage of development, but rarely is it regarded into its future. Familiarity has almost made us indifferent to the true mission of the poet. And while vaguely realizing the blessings accruing therefrom, we do not pause to appreciate the part played by the poet in our lives.

What then is art, is to become of poetry? Will it be as a stone that is flinted,
Thorns a season, and dies away; or does it embody three elements of human organization which only strengthen with time and change? Is it a natural development of human capability, or an artificial device resulting from ingenious minds? Had it a certain limited innate fulness which it has hitherto only to fulfill, and having armed in training humanity to a certain degree of culture and morality, will it withdraw from the race?

In following this line of investigation in future, as it may be called, we must bear in mind that poetic form and poetic content are inextricably allied, and poetry is wooing the name under subject and form exist in elevating harmony. In the separation of these four elements lies the possibility of art.
Repeated fallacy.

Tradition, and careful investigation have no room for doubt that poetry is called is the infancy of a literature. Throughout historic annals, the most undeveloped peoples have first voiced theirings passions in verse. The growth and change of poetic composition have been in great measure quantitative. Changes, wrought by the varying conditions of culture or degradation.

Beneath all exterior evidences, we still everywhere recognize the double purpose, the wish to enunciate a moral truth and the desire to give it the most pleasing possible expression. Here we find the one in the re-

bundant, there the other. With the primitive poets form rather than subject matter first.
offered allurement. But as we come later, as
we learn to appreciate poetry for its true value
as a criticism of life. Once verbal artlessness
falls upon the appetite. We defect the sac-
riifice of the higher purpose to happiness in
expression and are not pleased at the
deficit. We who receive the transfigured lan-
guage have changed more than the interpreter.
When man first conceived the idea of trans-
mitting his thoughts in some permanent form
to his contemporaries, what more natural than
that he should in dear to enshrine them in
the most attractive setting available? In essential
principles, the motions that animated the first
verse that was ever formed must have been
identical with those that guided the skilful
hand which polished the most sparkling gem
Of modern harmony in the undeveloped nature, intellect was subordinate to imagination. The imagery of some of the oldest poets known to mankind far surpassed any modern in boldness of conception and fiery vigor of execution.

That poetry is, in point of fact, the most attractive form of composition to undeveloped minds, is demonstrated by its effect upon children. Even to matter which is far beyond their comprehension, they will give the closest attention, if it be clothed in a lively and rhythmical form; and in many metrical children have shown a remarkable fondness and readiness for memorizing the words of the poets. They will listen contentedly to the recital of verse which prove
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Maricome to adult minds, which have come perhaps unconsciously, to regard poetry in the light of its double signification, as a means of pleasing, superficially, and of elevating mentally.

As the imagination pales before increasing intellect, will poetry, the language of the former, give way to the straight-forward discours of the practical philosopher? Truly will that be a sorry day for the moral world, which sees the cold, reasonable accommodation of fact and necessity, taking the place of the pulsating truths of spiritual beauty, appreciated and interpreted, which gives immortality, struggling to build a septic designed for the more ample hand of enterprise, and contemnedly striving to hold
Within the straight and narrow path, the morals of this wayward world; in a word, when the heart yields precedence to the brain in furnishing human nature's daily food.

That the moral force is indeed so closely allied to our recognition of the beautiful is appreciated by one who values the deficiency when mere beauty is admired as in a work of art. Just as a painting or a statue is valued for the answer which it calls forth from the soul of the contemplator, so poetry has merit only as it moves in its reader's aspirations for something higher and nobler than he had sought before. The secondary importance of form, and the necessity of a high standard in poetic composition is apparent from the fact that
It dare not become monotonous. Verse must offer endless variety. To avoid the tedious effect which is infinitely more disastrous to it than to any form of non-metrical literature.

Any conclusions as to the future of poetry, which hinge mainly upon one answer to the query: 'Is this principal form of communication a natural outgrowth, or an artificial acquisition?' I hold that it is a natural development of an inherent tendency; that every man is a poet in a more or less marked degree. "The kindling of the heart in the presence of nature," that is confined to any one order of men, or any stage of civilization. It belongs alike to the child, peasant, and philosopher; if
only the soul be pure and unspoiled

Is the extent that any man appreciates
the beautiful, to that extent he is a poet.
But in this walk, as in every other, ability
measures responsibility; and he is simply
honest who appreciates truly and is gifted
with talented powers of expression.
A poet is not born because Nature
offers more to him, but because he feels more
into Nature. Just as we can understand
the strength of others only by holding up
similar standards in our own minds, so
we can read the laws of God only by personal
recognition of their truth and beauty. Indeed
so far has Prof. Raymond of New York car
ride this theory of the natural origin of
poetry, that he has maintained that
Every man has his own special time. He finds his illustrations in the monotonous and often rhythmical cries of street vendors and the chants of priests and lepers.

Be this as it may, it is certain that the instincts which prompt fine poetry spring from every heart, and do not change with time. Painting and sculpture, though undeniably powerful in ethical significance, can never implant their sister Art, Drama as the are and universal force. Kind of man and as long as beautiful and graceful thoughts are implanted in him, the great Designer will point to this means of his Communication.

He recognize the fact that with increase of population and greater com-
Applications of human intents it become necessary to think more rapidly. We are then led to see the tendency of modern research of the practical intellectual trend of today. Do men see the living wonder with which God's miracles are regarded? Will Nature endure cross-examination and not suffer by the ordeal thus provoking her short-comings to the minds which seek to interpret this? Will fine understanding disturb the halo of beauty with which she has been surrounded, and leave no scope to the imagination? If we are forced to answer in the affirmative, then must we accede that the age of poetry is nearing an ignominious decline for beauty and pleasure, though not the ultimate aims.
are yet necessary conditions of poetic harmony. Scientiffic and poet are not altogether so widely separated. Both are essentially theoretics. The former has in view the analysis of nature. It is enough for him to respect, understand and classify his various phenomena. The poet, with a loftier purpose, makes this observation not a means to an end. It is duty to harmonize the beautiful and the moral, the physical and the spiritual, the known and the unknown. How invaluable to him, then, must be a perfect understanding! But only as through this matchless act, that expresses his appreciation of the All-lurading harmony which his investigation but makes more apparent.
And thus helps to lift up some mother, my brother. Understanding may be sufficient for a rational existence. But ethical life demands also beauty. To give it truth and color, and sweetness and sympathy. Man becomes so familiarized with the revelations of scientific research that he regards them no longer for purposes of direction, but synthetically, as a still stronger evidence of the one increasing purpose which runs through the ages, that may science ever furnish material for poetry.

But it may be asked, is there then to be the need? When the keen eye has become so trained that it can recognize the beauty of truth in any form. Will buried practical minds have need recourse to the extra
allurement of form, for we agree that this
turns the means of rendering
most impressive the ethical truths enunciated
and in the musical lines, to this I mean.
As before, that poetic form and poetic con-
tent are inseparable. So long as man has
a pure, receptive heart, filled with reverence
for God, he can not fail to be inspired by
the wonders of the physical world to the con-
sideration of the spiritual existence. So long as
he is moved by the phenomena about him
to the contemplation of marvels so far natural,
poetic inspiration will be fed from a bound-
less love and admiration.

Scientists themselves, writing of their
own investigations, have been far from enter-
taining views disastrous to the spirit of
poetry. "All I have been able to do," says Kepler, "is to read a few of the books of God." Time and understanding are not inconsistent with each other. The richer mind has but the broader field upon which to exercise itself. "In wonder," says Coleridge, "all Philosophy begins;" in wonder it ends. And Admiration fills up the in-betwixt. Of poetic philosophy this is truly true. In the human sympathy man by imparting the appreciation of a truth, for a new beauty is a new truth. He is the food which nourishes the literature of the race and the imagination. Left to itself, a brand soon burns itself out. Only by scattering its sparks can it perpetuate itself. Literature derives its whole significance from its office of "holding the mirror up..."
Many feel that modern poetry is losing its strength and becoming more influenced by its failure to reflect the passing years of contemporary life. It is no longer active, but reflective, as they say, and the only reservation is urged in a return to the conservative thought, diction, and metre which characterized Pope's shrill and narrow horizons. But the mirror is not at fault; it still pictures truth.

A reflective literature portrays a reflective age, an age enfolded by the decencies of mind over matter. Modern poetry centers far nearer the ideal of the art than did Pope with all his conservatism. And his fault lies methods. He shrived and forced contemporary life as inscribed objectively, int
he did not shine to touch upon those subject principles, which, more or less clearly defined, have been commonly with every nature, every mind which has been brought into existence, and which, once circling in their placid round, and all the tumult of the earth, ran that. In vain may this urge that this拉丁 poetry deals only with the vague and unreal. An idea is the most real thing in the world, and a great principle, the most essential of foundation stones. A treatise that sets forth in beautiful and attractive form the great universal idea of elevated humanity, has chosen a most living theme to drawn upon. Moreover, a declining reason will not antagonize his father encourage poetry. For
is not the greatest reasoner he who sees the
most and draws the most striking compar-
isons? The metaphorical embodiment of
the results of observation gives us the basis
of poetic literature for even a limited
study reveals to us the fact that the poet
involves in comparisons and uses the meta-
phor as his helmet first.

As also, if we take the stand which
is sometimes maintained that pure poe-
ty is representative of future advance-
ment is assured. For as science opens up
a clearer understanding of existing pheno-
mena, and by elucidating subtle connect-
ing links gives new fields upon which
descriptive talents may exercise themselves,
they will not fail to respond to their
increased opportunities. As a proof that descrip-
tive poems are not in the decline today, from
among the many, I choose and quote entire a
little sonnet of Richard Watson Gilder.

"What is a sonnet? Is it the pearly shell
That murmurs of the far off rustling sea:
A precious jewel, carved stone. Curiously:
It is a little picture, painted well.

"What is a sonnet? Is it the tear that fell
From a great poet's hidden ecstasy?
I for an edged sword, a star, a song. -- Ah me!
Sometimes a heavy-falling funeral bell.

"This was the flame that shook with Dante's breath:
The solemn organ whirled Milton played;
And the clear glass where Shakespeare's shadow falls.
I see this is Heaven. Tho' ventreath
In like a fjord, the narrow firm is laid.
And ocean deep to the sheer mountain wall
Let us thus regard all our poetry; for
If it by time that it is the embodiment of
pure harmonious sentiment arising from
contemplation of the deepest mysteries of
mental and physical life; if the heart of
the poet must be pure and unbullied, and
must reflect the times of contemporary life;
than it can not be otherwise than that the
decline of poetry, literature is an index of
nationally decadent minds which have ceased
to wonder have ceased to write. And in
lack of innocence arises the greatest degenera-
tion.
So then, it can not yet be spared, this
beautiful wealth of expression; but tell me
are you ready to acknowledge that there is
We longer need for the further cultivation of truth by beautiful and imaginative forms, that the mirror has reflected its light into my degraded soul, can I say with complacency. The work of Poetry is done.