


ESSAYS  
LITERARY,  
CRITICAL  
and ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁  
HISTORICAL



THOMAS  
O'HAGAN

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# ESSAYS

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AND HISTORICAL

BY  
THOMAS O'HAGAN,  
M.A., Ph.D.

Author of "Canadian Essays,"  
"Studies in Poetry," "In  
Dreamland," "Songs of  
the Settlement,"  
etc.



AUTHOR'S EDITION  
TORONTO  
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THOMAS O'HAGAN.

TO

HIS FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN,

THE FRENCH CANADIANS AND ACADIANS

Who, speaking the language of Bossuet  
and Lamartine, have added Lustre  
to our Canadian Citizenship,  
Virtue to our Canadian  
Homes, and Joy to our  
Canadian Firesides,

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED,

IN SINCERE ADMIRATION,

BY THE AUTHOR

## PREFACE.

Four of the five essays which make up this volume have appeared during the past few years in the *American Catholic Quarterly Review* and the *Champlain Educator*. The author begs to acknowledge particularly his indebtedness to Dr. S. E. Dawson's admirable work on Tennyson's "The Princess," in the preparation of his study of that poem. Indeed, without Dr. Dawson's fine analysis of the poem the first essay in this volume could never have been written.

The paper on "The Italian Renaissance and the Popes of Avignon" was prepared while the writer was sojourning at Louvain University, Belgium, in the autumn of 1903, and at Grenoble University, France, during the summer of 1904. It may be well to add that the libraries of both these ancient and renowned seats of learning are very rich in works relating to medieval history and literature, and afforded the author unusual opportunity in the preparation of the essay.

In the writing of the essay on "Poetry and History Teaching Falsehood," the author has been motivated by a desire to set forth in the clearest light possible the misrepresentation of Catholic truth which obtains in much of the history and poetry of our day.

The third essay in the volume, "The Study and Interpretation of Literature," is based by the author upon ideals gained in post-graduate courses pursued in this subject at several of the leading American universities, as well as upon a practical knowledge in the teaching of literature obtained in the High Schools of Ontario.

The paper on "The Degradation of Scholarship" has never before appeared in print. Let the reader, divested of every predilection and bias, examine it carefully, remembering that the courage to state the truth is a more valuable asset of character than the gift of bestowing false praise, though that praise should secure friends.

T. O'H.

Toronto, Canada, March, 1909.

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A STUDY OF TENNYSON'S  
"PRINCESS"

## A STUDY OF TENNYSON'S "PRINCESS."

Few poems written within the Victorian era of English literature have been so singularly underrated and misunderstood as Tennyson's "Princess." At its very birth—as if it had been born under an unfavorable star—it encountered the adverse breath of criticism; and even now, after nearly fifty years have rectified many a past error of judgment in literary matters, this, the first long and sustained poem of the late Poet Laureate, receives but grudging recognition and commendation in a general review and study of the author's works. We think it was a little unfortunate that its second title, "A Medley," was tacked to it when the poem first appeared, for it gave some of the critics who had neither the gifts nor disposition to study it aright a pretext, and, in some measure, justification, for the violent onslaughts which they from time to time made upon it.

In the light of the progressive views held to-day of the higher education of woman, this poem may be regarded as a prophecy voicing the advent of a broader, rounder and deeper culture for the race upon a plane of civilization in which woman as a primal factor and true complement of man shall unfold her being in a ceaseless striving for truth, beauty and love. The attainment of this higher condition of life will not, however, be hastened by isolated Idas walled within colleges of their own pride and sex, and vainly and foolishly waging war upon their own brothers; and every movement which starts out with the purpose of setting up woman as a rival of man in achievement, is not only a detriment to the cause of human progress, in which man and woman alike are shareholders, but the end thereof must be abasement and defeat.

The "Princess" appeared first in print in 1847, at a time, by the way, when the surface thought of England was largely given up to corn-laws and free-trade; and this may account, in some measure, for the coldness of the reception accorded it, as the English are a people who have proverbially little time or thought for "bainting and boetry" when a commercial or economic question is on the boards. The poem is a medley in form, but not in essence, as it possesses the real and deep-seated unity which all art demands—that of a consistent purpose and a pervading harmony of tone. The medley consists in the poem being serio-comic, constructed of ancient and modern materials—a show, as Edmund Clarence Stedman says, of medieval pomp and movement observed through an atmosphere of latter-day thought and emotion. It is such a mixture as we find in Shakespeare's "Winter's Tale," and, indeed, in the prologue the name of that drama is introduced as if to justify by precedent the incongruities of the narrative.

We think, however, that the critics have made too much out of the improbability of the incidents in the poem. Surely to be consistent such critics should extend their reproach to "The Tempest" and "Midsummer Night's Dream." To us the impossible elements and anachronisms render the poem more attractive. In estimating a poem we must always take for granted the conditions assumed by the poet, and these being assumed, we have only to inquire whether the poem possesses unity, congruity and a definite and worthy object. There are, however, two things we have a right to demand: that the characters are congruous with themselves, and that the treatment of the incidents is poetic. But as far as art is concerned, we should not lose our literary tempers or prepare to let fall the axe of condemnation merely because some idealized scene in a poem or drama does not harmonize in every particular with our own workaday world.

We mention this fact because in all fairness we consider that this poem, "The Princess," should be judged and appraised according to some canons and rules that apply to similar works of imagination and fancy.

The prologue and epilogue form the setting of the poem, and it would be difficult to find in all English literature a more truly natural and graceful picture than the scene from English life of to-day which the poet paints for us in the opening lines of the poem. The place is the South of England. The occasion a festival upon the grounds of a wealthy baronet. Sir Walter Vivian has thrown open his grounds for a summer's day, and the people of the neighboring town, and especially the members of its scientific institute, throng the park and give themselves up to recreation and pleasure. A party of young collegians on vacation, in company with some of the wellborn and cultured girls of the Hall and the neighboring country seats, have made a select picnic of their own in a ruined abbey. The baronet's son, young Walter Vivian, is of the company. One of the collegians, a dreamy youth—the poet himself—has been looking through the library and has come across a book telling of knightly deeds of the medieval ancestors of the stately Hall. Taking the book with him, he joins the party, keeping his finger on the place where is told the story of a fearless dame of the house, who, in defending her castle against a lawless king, had armed

"Her own fair head, and sallying thro' the gate  
Had beat her foes with slaughter from her walls.  
'O miracle of women,' said the book;  
'O noble heart who, being strait besieged  
By this wild king to force her to his wish,  
Nor bent nor broke nor shunned a soldier's death."

These last lines form a key to the story which Tennyson employs in giving us his views as to the proper sphere of woman, for this "miracle of women" is the prototype of the Princess Ida. While discussing the character of this heroine who defended her castle in days ago, the question at once arises among the members of the picnic party—are there such women now? One of the young ladies, Lilia, the baronet's daughter, answers:

"There are thousands now  
Such women, but convention beats them down,"

and in a half serious, half sportive way protests against the way in which nowadays the powers of her sex are dwarfed by insufficient culture, and as a consequence women are no longer capable of exhibiting such heroic qualities. Young Walter Vivian in the course of his remarks, which are banteringly addressed to his sister, mentions a favorite game which he and his college companions used to play, of telling a story from mouth to mouth, each one in succession taking up the thread till among them they brought the story to a close. It is then forthwith agreed that the seven youths should transfer this medieval miracle of womanhood to modern times in a story to which each should contribute a chapter. Of course, the conception out of which the plot is developed is the founding of a Ladies' University by the Princess Ida, who has set before her the task of

“Raising the woman’s fallen divinity  
Upon an equal pedestal with man.”

It may be added that the question discussed in this poem by Tennyson is one of vital importance to the human race, and is in every way worthy of the attention of the best and most earnest minds of our century. The poem proper is made up of seven cantos, written in semi-heroic verse, each story linked to and growing out of the previous canto. The first canto represents the Prince, who is none other than the poet himself, as longing for the bride betrothed to him in childhood. She, however, disregarding all pledge and promise, has conceived the idea of founding a University for Women, from which men are to be excluded on pain of death. To carry out her strange project she obtains from her father one of his castles with the domain surrounding it. Here the Princess Ida establishes her faculty, and rains down the dews of knowledge upon the thirsty flowers that bud and bloom under her high-souled care. This lofty enterprise is, however, in no way acceptable to the Prince, nor to the King, his father, who, inflamed with rage at her refusal to marry his son, swears

“That he will send a hundred thousand men  
And bring her in a whirlwind.”

The Prince, in company with two friends, Cyril and Florian, steals away by night from his father’s court for the purpose of making a personal appeal to his affianced bride, encouraged by a mysterious voice, borne upon the winds in the woods, which whispered,

“Follow, follow, thou shalt win.”

In his interview with Gama, the King, father of the Princess Ida, who, by the way, was powerless to oppose the wishes and designs of his daughter and her two widow companions, we learn the two fallacies which mislead the Princess in her design to found a Ladies’ University: that the woman is equal in all respects to the man, and that knowledge is all in all. These are the very two fallacies which to-day are productive of most mischief to the true advancement of woman.

The second book or canto brings the Prince and his two companions, disguised as women, to the University, where the detection of Florian by his sister, Lady Psyche, one of the lady lecturers, is narrated. The description of the grounds and walks leading to the University shows Tennyson’s keen knowledge of feminine nature. Just note, please, the following appointments in the grounds. Do they not reflect the artistic taste of woman?

“We follow’d up the river as we rode,  
And rode till midnight, when the college lights  
Began to glitter firefly-like in copse  
And linden alley: then we past an arch,  
Whereon a woman-statue rose with wings  
From four wing’d horses dark against the stars;  
And some inscription ran along the front,  
But deep in shadow: further on we gained  
A little street, half garden and half house;  
But scarce could hear each other speak for noise  
Of clock and chimes, like silver hammers falling  
On silver anvils, and the splash and stir  
Of fountains spouted up and showering down  
In meshes of the jasmine and the rose:  
And all about us peal’d the nightingale,  
Rapt in her song and careless of the snare.”

The only thing wrong in this nice bit of description, as Dr. S. E. Dawson has pointed out in his study of “The Princess,” is in reference to the song of the nightingale. It is only the male bird which sings. Scientifically, therefore, Tennyson is wrong, though historically and poetically he is correct, for, according to the Greek myth, Philomela was a princess who was turned into a nightingale which sang.

Lady Psyche having discovered that her three visiting friends are men, not women, the Prince and his two companions, upon promising a speedy departure, prevail upon the fair professor to conceal their real identity. Disguised as women, and keeping their hoods about their faces, the three young men stroll through the lecture-rooms and listen to the “violet-hooded doctors” descant on the ancient glories of Greece and Rome, now reciting some scrap of thunderous epic, now lilting off some throbbing ode, now dipping into the science of star and bird and shell and flower, electric, chemic laws and all the rest, and whatsoever can be taught and known—with what result? We will let the Prince tell:

“Till like three horses that have broken fence,  
And glutted all night long breast-deep in corn,  
We issued gorged with knowledge.”

Cyril, however, is not pleased with the condition of things, and thinks that violence is done to woman’s nature in this isolated institution. This plain-spoken fellow evidently regards the heart and its affections in woman as of much more importance than the intellect, for how otherwise are we to interpret his opinion, as expressed to Florian:

“A thousand hearts lie fallow in these halls,  
And round these halls a thousand baby loves  
Fly, twanging headless arrows at the hearts,  
Whence follows many a vacant pang.”

In the third canto the mock damsels pursue still further their studies, and mounted on horses, in company with the Princess, make a geological excursion in the neighboring country. The Prince and Princess ride side by side, and out of their conversation grows a reference to her betrothal to the young prince in the North. Her reply to the statement of her disguised companion, that her persistence in refusing to make good her pledge of marriage would surely lead to the death of the Prince, is characteristic of a woman who is waging war with her womanly instincts and the rooted affections of her heart, and undertakes the heavy task of breasting the current of nature with its strong and irresistible tide. Here is the crumb of consolation she offers him in his disappointment:

“‘Poor boy,’ she cried, ‘can he not read—no books?  
Quoit, tennis, ball—no games? nor deals in that  
Which men delight in, martial exercise?  
To nurse a blind ideal like a girl,  
Methinks he seems no better than a girl;  
As girls were once, as we ourself have been;  
We had our dreams; perhaps he mixt with them.’”

This reminds one of the advice given in Donald G. Mitchell’s “Reveries of a Bachelor” to a disappointed lover—to adopt a diet of vegetables and read Jeremy Taylor’s sermons.

The fourth canto contains the grand crash. It is also the canto which closes the humorous or serio-comic part of the story, the transition being made from jest to earnest at the request of Lilia, who, as spokeswoman for the ladies in the poem, objected to the banter in the first four cantos;

“They hated banter, wished for something real,  
A gallant fight, a noble Princess—why  
Not make her true heroic,—true sublime?  
Or all, they said, as earnest as the close?  
Which yet,” replies the poet, “scarce could be.”

The crash comes when Cyril, honest-hearted Cyril, after the party, tired from geologizing and astronomizing, are seated in a silken pavilion indulging in meat, wine and song, responds to the request of the Princess for a song that would have in it something of the flavor and manners of his countrywomen in the North. Cyril is a merry fellow and reminds one not a little of Shakespeare’s Mercutio. He is the least sentimental of the three friends, and while the Prince has been dwelling in cloudland, rocked in airy dreams, Cyril has given himself up to the excellent vintage of the southern kingdom, and so, wrought upon by the purple grape and his own sense of sport, he trolls out, in absolute forgetfulness of his disguise, a rollicking love-song in mellow and melodious tenor. Such song was not, of course, meant for the ears of the Princess and her companions, and so Florian nods at him frowning, Psyche flushes and wans, Melissa droops her brows, the Prince smites him on the breast, while the noble Ida, shocked beyond all endurance, cries, “Forbear, sir!” and “Home! to horse!” and dashing off on her steed falls into the river and is rescued from death by the Prince.

In the fifth canto the Northern King has marched with his army into the Southern kingdom, and, anxious for the safety of his son, has surrounded the Princess Ida’s domain. He has taken

the King, her father, a prisoner. Meantime, by judgment of the Princess Ida, the Prince and his two companions have been ignominiously thrust out of the University and reach the camp of the investing army in draggled female attire. Ida's warlike brothers, fearing for their sister's safety, march their troops northward to protect her. After a parley between the two armies, it is decided that the matter be finally settled by a tournament between fifty knights on each side—the hand of the Princess to be the reward of the Prince if his side win. The fight takes place and terminates unsuccessfully for the Prince, who loses his bride and is wounded nearly to death.

The tournament scene is, indeed, a magnificent passage and has about it a certain Homeric swiftness of movement and action that is in strong contrast to some of Tennyson's more labored narrative. We feel the shock of combat and shiver of lance as we read the following vehement lines, full of the pulse and power of the lists:

“Empanoplied and plumed

We entered in and waited, fifty there  
Opposed to fifty, till the trumpet blared  
At the barrier like a wild horn in a land  
Of echoes, and a moment, and once more  
The trumpet, and again: at which the storm  
Of galloping hoofs bare on the ridge of spears  
And riders front to front, until they closed  
In conflict with the crash of shivering points  
And thunder. Yet it seem'd a dream I dream'd  
Of fighting. On his haunches rose the steed,  
And into fiery splinters leapt the lance,  
And out of stricken helmets sprang the fire.  
Part sat like rocks: part reel'd but kept their seats:  
Part roll'd on the earth and rose again and drew:  
Part stumbled mixt with floundering horses. Down  
From those two bulks at Arac's side and down  
From Arac's arm, as from a giant's flail,  
The large blows rain'd, as here and everywhere  
He rode the mellay, lord of the ringing lists,  
And all the plain,—brand, mace and shaft and shield—  
Shock'd like an iron-clanking anvil bang'd  
With hammers.

\* \* \* \* \*

With that I drave

Among the thickest and bore down a Prince,  
And Cyril one. Yea, let me make my dream  
All that I would. But that large-moulded man,  
His visage all agrin as at a wake,  
Made at me thro' the press and staggering back  
With stroke on stroke the horse and horseman, came  
As comes a pillar of electric cloud,  
Flaying the roofs and sucking up the drains,

And shadowing down the champaign till it strikes  
On a wood, and takes, and breaks and cracks and splits,  
And twists the grain with such a roar that Earth  
Reels and the herdsmen cry; for everything  
Gave way before him: only Florian, he  
That loved me closer than his own right eye,  
Thrust in between; but Arac rode him down:  
And Cyril seeing it, push'd against the Prince,  
With Psyche's color round his helmet, tough,  
Strong, supple, sinew-corded, apt at arms;  
But tougher, heavier, stronger, he that smote  
And threw him: last I spurr'd; I felt my veins  
Stretch with fierce heat; a moment hand to hand,  
And sword to sword, and horse to horse we hung,  
Till I struck out and shouted; the blade glanced;  
I did but shear a feather, and dream and truth  
Flow'd from me; darkness closed me; and I fell."

The sixth canto is, perhaps, taken all in all, the finest in the poem. In it the full strength of the poet is put forth. The field of battle, the wounded knights, the old king's haggard face stooping over the prostrate body of his son—all are themes for touching and pathetic pictures. How beautifully the poet traces in this canto the growth and final supremacy of the true womanly elements in Ida's nature. The tender domestic instincts, first awakened by the care of Psyche's child, are now quickened into new and stronger life by the presence of suffering and sorrow around her.

The seventh canto, which opens with one of the sweetest songs in the English language, "Ask Me No More," shows the complete transfiguration of Ida's nature under the influence of the affections. The college has been turned into an hospital, and the ministry of the heart in all its tenderness has taken the place of mere pride of intellect. Love has built its lily walls and transformed the cold hearth of solitude and selfishness into a radiant altar of self-sacrifice, devotion and love.

"Everywhere

Low voices with the ministering hand  
Hung round the sick: the maidens came, they talk'd,  
They sang, they read: till she not fair began  
To gather light, and she that was, became  
Her former beauty treble."

Ida sits by the couch of the Prince, watching him in his delirium of fever. Her name is ever on his lips. Finally, in the still summer night, consciousness returns, and observing Ida at his bedside he murmurs:



“If you be, what I think you, some sweet dream,  
I would but ask you to fulfil yourself:  
But if you be that Ida whom I knew,  
I ask you nothing: only, if a dream,  
Sweet dream, be perfect. I shall die to-night.  
Stoop down and seem to kiss me ere I die.”

The transforming power of love has done its work. Ida, who sought far less for truth than power in knowledge, is defeated in her purpose, but rises in this apparent defeat to the supreme height of her womanhood. Frankly she confesses her failure and the cause thereof:

“She had failed in sweet humility.”

Still she will not relinquish her high hopes of a nobler future for woman; nor is it necessary that she should do so. “Rather,” says the Prince,

“Henceforth thou hast a helper, me, that know  
The woman’s cause is man’s: they rise or sink  
Together, dwarf’d or godlike, bond or free.

\* \* \* \* \*

If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,  
How shall men grow? but work no more alone!  
Our place is much: as far as in us lies  
We two will serve them both in aiding her—  
Will clear away the parasitic forms  
That seem to keep her up but drag her down—  
Will leave her space to burgeon out of all  
Within her—let her make herself her own  
To give or keep, to live and learn and be  
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.”

And then, in the following beautiful passage, which for majesty of thought and delicacy of feeling can scarcely be matched in the whole realm of poetry, the poet describes the relations of man’s nature to woman’s and paints the ideal of a perfect marriage:

“For woman is not undeveloped man,  
But diverse: could we make her as the man,  
Sweet Love were slain: his dearest bond is this,  
Not like to like, but like in difference.  
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;  
The man be more of woman, she of man;  
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,  
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;

She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,  
Nor lose the child-like in the larger mind;  
Till at the last she set herself to man,  
Like perfect music unto noble words;  
And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,  
Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their powers,  
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,  
Self-reverent each and reverencing each,  
Distinct in individualities,  
But like each other ev'n as those who love.  
Then comes the statelier Eden back to men;  
Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm:  
Then springs the crowning race of humankind."

Then follows the epilogue or conclusion, whereby the reader is transferred from the fairy-land of imagination back to the festival crowd in the park, with which the poem commenced. There is not a jar in the transition, and the mind of the reader, translated from the stirring incidents of trumpet and tournament, finds repose in the idyllic beauty which reigns in the heart of English life and scenes.

Having traced the motive of the story and the unity of its conception throughout, let us now see whether the separate characters are congruous within themselves, and in what way they have a share in the development of the plot.

The Princess Ida is drawn as the prototype of "the miracle of women" who beat the king and his forces with slaughter from the walls. She possessed a noble enthusiasm, a quality which would have made her an ideal wife for Arthur. As a wife she would have sympathized with him in his lofty aims and purposes, and been willing to share with him in his failures and lost hopes:

"She sees herself in every woman else,  
And so she wears her errors like a crown."

With what a loving hand Tennyson does justice to her unselfish nature, even with the failure of her enterprise inevitable. Cold natures cannot understand her enthusiasm for the cause which she has espoused:

"They know not, cannot guess  
How much their welfare is a passion to us.  
If we could give them surer, quicker proof—  
Oh! if our end were less achievable  
By slow approaches, than by single act  
Of immolation; any phase of death;  
We were as prompt to spring against the pikes,  
Or down the fiery gulf, as talk of it,  
To compass our dear sisters' liberties."

And as the womanly elements gain ascendancy in her nature, how beautifully the poet tells

of the dawning of love in her heart:

“Love, like an Alpine harebell hung with tears,  
By some cold morning glacier; frail at first  
And feeble, all unconscious of itself,  
But such as gathered color day by day.”

The Prince represents the poet himself, and when he speaks it may be taken for granted that his opinions relative to woman's sphere and duties are the opinions of Tennyson himself. It may be noticed that his character is not defined in very strong colors, simply because he is a foil to the Princess, and would, if brought out more strongly, detract from the brilliancy of the Princess as well as mar the general unity of the poem. The character of the Prince must have given Tennyson a great deal of trouble, for it was not until after the fourth edition that he ceased to elaborate it. It is hard to understand why the poet added the passages relating to the weird seizures of the Prince. Perhaps his object was to set forth the weakness and incompleteness of the poet side of the Prince's character until he has found rest in his ideal.

It will be observed, too, that the Prince aims at elevating woman, but he differs from Ida as to the means. Ida dreams of intellectual advancement alone. The Prince recognizes moral elevation to be the higher of the two. He pays tribute to the moral greatness of woman where he says they are,

“Not like that piebald miscellany, man;  
Bursts of great heart and slips in sensual mire;  
But whole and one; and take them all in all,  
Were we ourselves but half as good, as kind,  
As truthful, much that Ida claims as right  
Had ne'er been mooted.”

And when the Prince sets forth the mission of woman as the conservator of the results of civilization hardly won by the struggles of man, and paints his ideal of a perfect marriage, the Princess asks:

“What woman taught you this?”

To which the Prince replies, in language which touches the heart of every man:

“One

Not learned, save in gracious household ways;  
Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants;  
No Angel, but a dearer being, all dipt  
In Angel instincts, breathing Paradise,  
Interpreter between the gods and men,  
Who looked all native to her place, and yet  
On tiptoe seem'd to touch upon a sphere  
Too gross to tread, and all male minds perforce  
Swayed to her from their orbits as they moved  
And girdled her with music. Happy he  
With such a mother! faith in womankind  
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high  
Comes easy to him, and tho' he trip and fall,  
He shall not blind his soul with clay.”

As to the characters of the two kings, they are well conceived and drawn. Ida's father has an easy, loving disposition, and it is very evident that she inherits her strength of character from her mother. The Northern King is of a rough and violent type, which recalls the time when marriage was a capture:

“Look you—Sir!

Man is the hunter; woman is the game;  
The sleek and shining creatures of the chase,  
We hunt them for the beauty of their skins;  
They love us for it and we ride them down.”

While the character of Florian is vague and indefinite, that of Cyril is well and clearly conceived. The latter is a wholesome, jovial and honest-hearted fellow. He is no dreamer and can always tell the substance from the shadow. He is not at all impressed by stately women, and so he tells the Princess that Love and Nature are more terrible than she.

The two widows, Lady Psyche and Lady Blanche, are in sharp contrast to each other. The former remains womanly under every circumstance. Even when discoursing on the nebular hypothesis in the lecture-room, we find that her babe, sweet Aglæa, is by her side, and when she has lost it she bitterly reproaches herself for having left it behind.

Lady Blanche is the most unlovely woman in the whole gallery of Tennyson's women. She has no thought but for herself, and even asperses the memory of her dead husband. She is full of envy and jealousy, nor has she even the affection of a mother for her sunny-hearted and winsome daughter, Melissa. She is a type of not a few who identify themselves with the Woman's Rights movement of to-day, ostensibly to better the social and intellectual position of woman, but virtually to blow a bubble before the eyes of the world and gather about them an atmosphere of notoriety.

Having analyzed the poem as to its motive and plot, and shown the part which each character contributes to the development of the plot, we will now consider the purpose and import of the songs or ballads which the young ladies sing during the pauses or interludes in

the poem. The songs did not appear at first, but were added by the poet to the third edition, which appeared in 1850. It will be noticed that they nearly all relate to children, and serve as choruses to guide and interpret the sympathies of the reader in the progress of the poem. Let us take them in their order, one by one. The first tells of a quarrel between a man and his wife, and of the reconciliation caused by the memory of their dead child:

“As thro’ the land at eve we went,  
    And pluck’d the ripen’d ears,  
We fell out, my wife and I,  
O we fell out I know not why,  
    And kiss’d again with tears.  
And blessings on the falling out  
    That all the more endears,  
When we fall out with those we love  
    And kiss again with tears!  
For when we came where lies the child  
    We lost in other years,  
There above the little grave,  
O there above the little grave,  
    We kiss’d again with tears.”

Here we have the abiding influence of the child reaching back from the grave and uniting by its memory the tearful and desolate hearts of the estranged parents.

The second represents how the toil and labor of the father are ennobled and lightened amid the perils of the deep through the memory of the little babe for whose life and love he fondly braves every danger:

“Sweet and low, sweet and low,  
    Wind of the western sea,  
Low, low, breathe and blow,  
    Wind of the western sea!  
Over the rolling waters go,  
Come from the dying moon, and blow,  
    Blow him again to me,  
While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.

“Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,  
    Father will come to thee soon;  
Rest, rest, on mother’s breast,  
    Father will come to thee soon;  
Father will come to his babe in the nest,  
Silver sails all out of the west  
    Under the silver moon:  
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.”

Sweet influence, indeed, this of the babe which reaches across the ocean and unites loving

hearts.

The next song, "The Bugle," is regarded by many as the finest lyric that has been written since the days of Shakespeare. Its real meaning is frequently not grasped by the casual reader. It is based upon the contrast between the echoes of a bugle on a mountain lake, which grow fainter and fainter in proportion to the receding distance, and the influence of soul upon soul through growing distances of time:

"The splendor falls on castle walls  
And snowy summits old in story:  
The long light shakes across the lakes,  
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.  
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

"O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,  
And thinner, clearer, farther going!  
O sweet and far from cliff and scar  
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!  
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:  
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

"O love, they die in yon rich sky,  
They faint on hill or field or river:  
*Our* echoes roll from soul to soul  
And *grow* forever and forever.  
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying."

The stress of meaning is in the words *our* and *grow*. *Our* echoes roll from *soul to soul*—from generation to generation—from grandparent to parent and grandchild. This poem represents unity through the family in its relation to the future, just as the first two songs represent that unity through the past and present.

The fourth is intended to show the influences of home and wedded love in nerving a man for the shocks and conflicts of life:

"Thy voice is heard thro' rolling drums,  
That beat to battle where he stands;  
Thy face across his fancy comes,  
And gives the battle to his hands:  
A moment while the trumpets blow,  
He sees his brood about thy knee;  
The next, like fire he meets the foe,  
And strikes him dead—for *thine and thee*."

We see by this lyric that patriotism and heroic effort have their root and origin in home affection.

The next song represents the influence of the family, of which the child is the bond, upon

the mother:

“Home they brought her warrior dead:  
She nor swoon’d nor utter’d cry:  
All her maidens, watching, said,  
‘She must weep or she will die.’

“Then they praised him, soft and low,  
Call’d him worthy to be loved,  
Truest friend and noblest foe;  
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

“Stole a maiden from her place,  
Lightly to the warrior stept,  
Took the face-cloth from the face;  
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

“Rose a nurse of ninety years,  
Set his child upon her knee—  
Like summer tempest came her tears—  
‘Sweet my child, I live for thee.’”

In this poem we see that desolation and despair have sealed the fountain of tears in the widowed wife—that the light of love has gone from her life and returns only through the influence of childhood, with all its tender links and memories.

The last song, “Ask Me No More,” is like the sestet in a sonnet—the application of all the preceding. These influences of the family, with all its sacred ties and affections, are too much for the strong and noble soul of the Princess, who throws aside all theories of intellectual independence for woman, and, yielding to the impulse of love and affection, proclaims the triumph of the womanly elements in her nature in the following sweet and tender lines:

“Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea;  
The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the shape,  
With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape;  
But O too fond, when have I answered thee?  
Ask me no more.

“Ask me no more; what answer should I give?  
I love not hollow cheek or faded eye:  
Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die!  
Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live;  
Ask me no more.

“Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are seal’d:  
I strove against the stream and all in vain:  
Let the great river take me to the main:  
No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;  
Ask me no more.”

What bearing these six lyrics, which are truly miracles of workmanship, have upon the main theme of the story will be readily perceived. They not only contribute to the unity of the poem proper but are in themselves linked together by a kindred bond and purpose. They are the voice of the heart singing through the night, cheered by the kindly stars of faith, hope and love.

Having analyzed the poem and reached its central thought, let us now consider who is the hero or heroine of the story. Assuredly it is not the Prince, for he has been ignominiously thrust out of Ida’s gates in draggled female clothes. Nor is it his jovial-hearted companion, Cyril, nor Arac, who cares for nothing save the tournament. It cannot even be the high-souled and stately Princess, for has she not been vanquished at the very moment of triumph? The only one who comes out triumphantly is Psyche’s baby—she is the real heroine of the epic. The little blossom, sweet Aglæa, is the central point upon which the plot turns. In the poem, in the songs—everywhere—this unconscious child, the concrete embodiment of nature itself, exerts an overpowering influence, shaping, directing, nurturing the tender instincts of womanhood and clearing away all intellectual theories which tend to usurp the sacred offices of mother and home.

In the despatch which Ida sends to her brother she acknowledges the power of the child in the following lines:

“I took it for an hour in mine own bed  
This morning: there the tender orphan hands  
Felt at my heart, and seemed to charm from thence  
The wrath I nursed against the world.”

And again:

“I felt  
Thy helpless warmth about my barren breast  
In the dead prime.”

Notice, too, how ubiquitous the babe is. Ida carries it with her everywhere. It is on her judgment seat, it shares in her song of triumph when the tournament is ended, and is with her on the battlefield when she is tending her wounded brothers.

The babe is indeed the heroine of the story, holding the epic along the channel of its main motive, despite every current and breeze stirred by foreign elements in its course.

It is not hard to read in this poem Tennyson’s solution of the woman question, though there are some who maintain that it is vague and unsatisfactory. Such persons forget that it is the office of the poet not so much to affirm principles on a subject as to inspire the sentiments which ought to preside over the solution.

It seems to us that the transfiguration of Ida’s nature under the influence of the affections is



the only solution possible that could be offered by the poet for the questions raised in "The Princess." It is the office of poetry, not to guide the conclusions of the intellect, but to tone the feelings in accordance with truth and duty. Poetry is not to teach the truth—it is truth itself.

Those who have the interest of the true advancement of woman at heart should remember that neither the whole race nor woman herself can be benefited by any system of education for woman at variance with Nature and not co-ordinate with the highest needs of the race. It is idle to discuss the equality or inequality of gifts and faculties as between man and woman. Every person knows that woman is not only the equal of man in many respects, but his superior in not a few; yet this does not justify her in waging a war with Nature and, with her heart clothed in an iron panoply, riding forth into the arena of dust and turmoil to perform services for which the strong hand and knightly heart of man as well as the vocation of centuries have fitted him alone.

As to her education, that which enables her every faculty to grow and unfold its beauty and power, with no harm to her distinctive womanhood—that should be her privilege and right to enjoy, whether it be obtained in convent or co-education hall. That woman needs a greater breadth and solidity of intellectual culture goes without saying, and this for two reasons—to better fit her for the high moral offices which belong to her domestic mission, and to keep alive in her a just sympathy with the larger social movements of which she is the passive, but ought not to be the uninterested spectator.

If Ida's theories were carried out, the child element in woman and the feminine element in man would be crushed out, and it is this very feminine element in man which gives him moral insight—it constitutes the poetic side of his nature. Without the feminine element in his nature Chaucer never could have written "The Canterbury Tales."

Ida was right in seeking for a more generous culture, but the spirit in which she sought it was wrong. Mrs. Browning's Aurora Leigh would be an artist first and then a woman. Ida, too, would crush out the womanly elements in her nature in her eagerness to satisfy the claims of the intellect. She set the claims of the head above those of the heart, and, like Aurora Leigh, she failed.

Enthusiasts often point to the glories achieved by women through the centuries, and make this a pretext for their vagaries and Utopian dreams. Because Corinna won the lyric prize from Pindar, and Judith delivered her people from Holofernes, and Joan of Arc repulsed the English from the walls of Orleans, and Queen Elizabeth laid the foundation of England's supremacy upon the sea, is it meet that the whole social order should be turned upside down and Nature wounded in its very heart? Such enthusiasts forget that the mother of Themistocles was greater than the vanquisher of Pindar, the mother of St. Louis of France greater than the Maid of Orleans, and the mother of Shakespeare greater than she who held with firm grasp the sceptre of English sovereignty during the closing years of the Tudor period.

In spite, therefore, of all theories to the contrary, in spite of many zealous but misguided women who are looking in the near future for the reign of woman and the complete subserviency of man, the true mission of woman is, and always will continue to be, within the domestic sphere, where she conserves the accumulated sum of the moral education of the race, and keeps burning through the darkest night of civilization upon the sacred altar of humanity, the vestal fires of Truth, Beauty, and Love.

POETRY AND HISTORY TEACHING  
FALSEHOOD

## POETRY AND HISTORY TEACHING FALSEHOOD.

The function of the poet is to speak essential truths as opposed to relative truths, and Mrs. Browning in "Aurora Leigh" testifies to this fact in the following lines:

"I write so  
Of the only truth-tellers now left to God,  
The only speakers of essential truth  
Opposed to relative, comparative,  
And temporal truths; the only holders by  
His sun-skirts, through conventional gray glooms;  
The only teachers who instruct mankind  
From just a shadow on a charnel wall  
To find man's veritable stature out  
Erect, sublime,—the measure of a man;  
And that's the measure of an angel says  
The Apostle."

It is much to be regretted that the poetry of the present day does not always fulfil this high purpose. The poets of to-day—and by poets of to-day I mean the poets of the past half-century—are not "the only truth-tellers now left to God." Nay, they are often disseminators of falsehood. It is true the non-Catholic poet—a Wordsworth, a Byron, a Longfellow, or a Tennyson—by being true to art and inspiration, which has as its basis Catholic truth, sometimes unwittingly expresses a Catholic truth of the deepest significance. But as poetry is only a reflection of life idealized, and as there is nothing in poetry but what is in life, we may expect the anti-Catholic seeds scattered about by prejudiced hearts in the garden of the world to bear the poisonous blossoms of falsehood as they are translated and reflected in the pages of modern poetry.

And this is sometimes done indirectly. Sometimes, too, it is done by expressing a half truth or by seizing on some exceptional phase of Catholic religious life and impressing it upon the non-Catholic mind with an "*Ab uno disce omnes.*"

A concrete example will best illustrate this. Browning has a poem entitled "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church." Now Browning's poetic workshop was Italy, so this great psychological poet wrote:

"Open my heart and you shall see  
Graven on it Italy."

He found in the land of Dante and Michael Angelo fit subjects for his dramatic monologues. The art world of Italy opened up to Browning new themes, new thoughts. The intense life of its people, full of the sweetness and aroma of virtue and the dark tragedy of vice, gave him scope which he could not find elsewhere. Pity it is that he presents only the dark side of Italian character. Pity it is that the paganzed and sensual Bishop of the Italian Renaissance depicted

by Browning in "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church" did not find setting, in his poems, as a foil to the pure and pious men and women who prayed before the shrines and in the cloisters of Italy when the new wine of old classicism poured from Homeric flasks and casks had intoxicated the head and heart of that garden of Europe and turned possible saints into satyrs.

De Maistre, the great French publicist, has said that history for the past three hundred years has been a conspiracy against truth. Aye, and poetry, too, whose countenance should reflect the beauty of heavenly truth, often wears the mask of the assassin. To-day there are so-called advanced and up-to-date scholars in our universities and clubs who hold that "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church" is a true reflection of the religious life of the Italian Renaissance. They quote Ruskin as saying of that poem:

"I know of no other piece of modern English, prose or poetry, in which there is so much told as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit—its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin. It is nearly all that I have said of the Central Renaissance, in thirty pages of the 'Stones of Venice,' put into as many lines, Browning's being also the antecedent work."

We would say just here to students of literature and history: Let not the shadow of a great literary name overawe you. John Ruskin did a great deal for art and criticism, but he is far from being an infallible apostle of truth in either domain; and though he loved the lowly, brown-hooded friars of St. Francis, this love was not based on spiritual affinity, but on the poetry and art bound up in their humble lives.

John Ruskin and Robert Browning, respectively art critic and poet, have done the religious life of the Italian Renaissance a grievous wrong—nay, they grossly misrepresent it when they say that this abnormal picture of a Renaissance Catholic bishop truly represents and reflects the religious life of Italy at that period. No doubt but a certain amount of abuses and corruption prevailed in the Church at that time, largely as a consequence of the worldly spirit which had gained entrance into it during its exile at Avignon.

However, all was not darkness and sin. The vivifying life of the Church was not exemplified in the Bishop of St. Praxed's. As the great historian of the Popes of the Renaissance, Dr. Ludwig Pastor, says, "If those days were full of failings and sins of every kind, the Church was not wanting in glorious manifestations through which the source of her higher life revealed itself. Striking contrasts—deep shadows on the one hand and most consoling gleams of sunshine on the other—are the special characteristics of this period. If the historian of the Church of the fifteenth century meets with some unworthy prelates and bishops, he also meets in every part of Christendom with an immense number of men distinguished for their virtue, piety and learning, not a few of whom have been, by the solemn voice of the Church, raised to her altars."

Limiting ourselves to the most remarkable individuals of the period of which we are about to treat, we shall mention only the saints and holy men and women given by Italy to the Church: St. Bernardine of Siena, of the order of Minorites, whose eloquence won for him the title of "Trumpet of Heaven and fountain of knowledge"; around him are grouped his holy brothers in religion, Saints John Capestran and Jacopo della Marca. St. Antonius, whose unexampled zeal was displayed in Florence, the very centre of the Renaissance, had for his disciples blessed Antonio Neyrot of Ripoli and Constanzio di Fabriano. In the order of St. Augustine are the following who have been beatified: Andrea, who died at Montereale in 1497; Antonio Turriani, in 1494. In 1440 St. Frances, the foundress of the Oblates, was working at Rome. The labors of

another founder, St. Francis of Paula, who died in 1507, belong in part to this period. These names, to which many more might be added, furnish the most striking proof of the vitality of religion in Italy at the time of the Renaissance. Such fruits do not ripen on trees which are “decayed and rotten to the core.”

Indeed, it is astonishing what nonsense is talked about this period of the Italian Renaissance, especially as it influenced the religious life of the people. In one breath our would-be professors will tell you that the Italian Renaissance movement swept the Catholic Church into a vortex of paganism—pope, cardinals, bishops, and all; and in the next they will lead you to believe that the Catholic Church set its face against the new revival of classical learning, fearing that the development of the intellect would be prejudicial to the faith of the people. Either slander will effect its end.

As we write we have before us two historical works of somewhat recent publication: “Books and Their Makers During the Middle Ages,” by George Haven Putnam, A.M., and “A General History of Europe,” by Professors Thatcher and Schwill, of Chicago University. As the latter is now used as a text-book in many American High Schools, we will deal with its worth and wisdom first.

There is but one Chicago University in the world, and we might expect its distinguished professors of medieval and modern European history to understand at least the elementary truths of the Catholic Church and something of its spirit and policy.

Let us examine for a moment some of the statements contained in this “General History of Europe,” by Professors Thatcher and Schwill. Here is a choice morsel which will amuse the student of Church history. The topic is “The Church and Feudalism.” The author says: “As late as the eleventh century it was not at all uncommon for the clergy to marry. Since fiefs were hereditary, it seemed perfectly proper that their children should be provided for out of the Church lands which they held. But unless all their children became clergymen these lands would pass into the hands of laymen and therefore be lost to the Church. *One of the purposes of the prohibition of the marriage of the clergy was to prevent this alienation and diminution of the Church lands.*”

And this little paragraph dealing with the Italian Renaissance, found on page 264 of the same work: “Medieval life knew nothing of the freedom, beauty and joy of the Greek world. . . . The medieval man had no eye for the beauty of nature. To him nature was evil. God had indeed created the world and pronounced it very good, but through the fall of man all nature had been corrupted. Satan was now the prince of the world. *As a result no one could either study or admire nature.*” Pray note the force of the auxiliary “could.”

Just think of it! A Catholic—a medieval Catholic—was forbidden to look at or admire a flower, a forest, or a mountain peak. How so much of nature got mixed up in the singing of “Old Dan Chaucer,” a Catholic poet of the fourteenth century, we know not. ’Tis a mystery. Chaucer is essentially the poet of the daisy, and robed it in verse long before Burns turned it over with his plough.

Then we have the brown-hooded and gentle Friar, St. Francis of Assisi, who was wont to call the birds of the air and the beasts of the field his brothers, and who composed canticles to the winds, the flowers and the sun. Did the erudite professors of Chicago University ever make a study of Gothic architecture, the distinct inspiration and creation of medieval times? If so, they will remember that plants and flowers play, in symbolism, an important part in ornamentation. The hatred of nature as well as the hatred of art imputed to the early Christians is simply a “*fable convenue*,” manufactured by the partisan and superficial historian who is

either too dishonest or indolent to state or reach the real facts.

It is enough to say that Professors Thatcher and Schwill's work is actually teeming with historical inaccuracies and gross misrepresentations of the Catholic Church. Whether by inference or blunt statement, these two professors have written themselves down in the pages of their history either as ignorant or dishonest historians, and it is unworthy of a presumably great university, such as Chicago, to give its *imprimatur* to such unreliable and unscholarly works.

But lest we may not have convicted as yet Professors Thatcher and Schwill of having misrepresented the truth, life and policy of the Catholic Church in the pages of their history, we shall cite one more paragraph found on page 172. It deals with monasticism. The author says: "The philosophic basis of asceticism is the belief that matter is the seat of evil, and therefore that all contact with it is contaminating. This conception of evil is neither Christian nor Jewish, but purely heathen. Jesus freely used the good things of this world and taught that sin is in nothing external to man, but has its seat only in the heart. *But His teaching was not understood by His followers.* The peculiar form which this asceticism in the Church took is called monasticism. . . . After about 175 A.D. the Church rapidly grew worldly. As Christianity became popular large numbers entered the Church and became Christians in name; but at heart and in life they remained heathen. The bishops were often proud and haughty and lived in grand style. Those who were really in earnest about their salvation, unsatisfied with such worldliness, fled from the contamination in the Church and went to live in the desert and find the way to God without the aid of the Church: her means of grace were for common Christians. Those who would could obtain, by means of asceticism and prayer, all that others received by means of the sacraments of the Church. There were to be two ways of salvation: one through the Church and her means of grace; the other through asceticism and contemplation."

There is assuredly something of the historical *naïveté* of the schoolboy in the above. Mark when the Christian Church became corrupt—nearly one hundred and fifty years before it was upheld by the arm of Constantine and when it had been hiding for more than one hundred years in the Catacombs carving and painting in symbol the truths and mysteries of God. This was the corruption, that as Christ had birth in the lowly manger of Bethlehem so the Church, His Spouse, was cradled in humility, hidden away from the purple rage of the Cæsars, and, like a little child whose dreams are of the past and the future, was rudely fashioning her life and soul in terms of eternity, in symbols of the palm, the dove and the lamb.

Now let us cite from Putnam's "Books and Their Makers in the Middle Ages" an instance of historical contradiction within the compass of three pages. It is said that he who misrepresents the truth must have a good memory, but the author of "Books and Their Makers in the Middle Ages" is evidently devoid of that faculty, otherwise he would not have contradicted himself in almost succeeding pages of his work. Here is the contradiction. He is speaking of book-making at the time of the Italian Renaissance. On page 331, Vol. I., the author says: "A production of Beccadelli's, perhaps the most brilliant of Alfonso's literary *protégés*, is to be noted as having been proscribed by the Pope, being one of the earliest Italian publications to be so distinguished. Eugenius IV. forbade, under penalty of excommunication, the reading of Beccadelli's "Hermaphroditus," which was declared to be *contra bonos mores*. The book was denounced from many pulpits, and copies were burned, together with portraits of the poet, on the public squares of Bologna, Milan and Ferrara."

On page 333 of the same volume Putnam writes—and we beg the reader will compare carefully the two statements: "Poggio is to be noted as a free thinker who managed to keep in

good relations with the Church. *So long as free thinkers confined their audacity to such matters as form the topic of Poggio's 'Facetiae,' Beccadelli's 'Hermaphroditus' or La Casa's 'Capitolo del Farno' the Roman Curia looked on and smiled approvingly. The most obscene books to be found in any literature escaped the Papal censure, and a man like Aretino, notorious for his ribaldry, could aspire with fair prospects of success to the scarlet of a Cardinal.*"

These are the kind of books that stuff the shelves of the libraries in our great secular universities.

There is perhaps no other period in the history of the world that requires more careful investigation than that of the Renaissance in Italy, and this because of its complex character. Speaking of this complexity Dr. Pastor says: "In the nature of things it must be extremely difficult to present a truthful picture of an age which witnessed so many revolutions affecting almost all departments of human life and thought, and abounded in contradictions and startling contrasts. But the difficulty becomes enormously increased if we are endeavoring to formulate a comprehensive appreciation of the moral and religious character of such an epoch. In fact in one sense the task is an impossible one. No mortal eye can penetrate the conscience of a single man; how much less can any human intellect strike the balance between the incriminating and the extenuating circumstances on which our judgment of the moral condition of such a period depends, amid the whirl of conflicting events. In a rough way, no doubt, we can form an estimate, but it can never pretend to absolute accuracy. As Burckhardt, author of 'The Civilization of the Period of the Renaissance in Italy,' says: 'In this region the more clearly the facts seem to point to any conclusion the more must we be upon our guard against unconditional or universal assertions.'"

It were well assuredly if some of our professors of history in the great secular universities—professors who assume to understand the Catholic Church and her policy better than her own clergy and laity—it were well, we say, if these would lay to their historical souls Pastor's judicial words ere they indict the "Renaissance Period" and blacken the character of its popes, its prelates and its people.

The truth is that few if any non-Catholic students read Catholic historical works to-day. Jansen's great work, dealing with the social and religious life of Germany in the period that preceded the advent of Luther, is considered to be the last word on this debatable ground, and yet how many non-Catholic students have ever opened its pages? The same may be said of Pastor's monumental work, "Lives of the Popes Since the Close of the Middle Ages." When this ignorance of Catholic fact is supplemented by the reading of such misrepresentation as is found in Browning's poem, "The Bishop Orders His Tomb," what hope can there be of justice to Catholic truth and the Catholic faith in our great secular universities?

We see, then, that not alone are the facts of history falsified, but the genius of the poet is enlisted to give glamor and glow to the historical slander.

Take again Tennyson's poem, "St. Simeon Stylites." This is a satire on ascetic life. Tennyson was a Broad Churchman, and it is said that he was particularly careful not to write anything that would offend the religious feelings of any of his friends. He saw, however, at the time of the "Oxford Movement," the English mind in certain quarters look with favor on monasticism, and he wrote "St. Simeon Stylites" as a rebuke to the movement. But is it a true picture of the spirit and life of those early hermits of the desert? Not at all. Tennyson as a satirist did not aim at truth, but rather at exaggeration. So he puts into the mouth of this pillar-fixed saint these words of pride:

“A time may come, yea, even now,  
When you may worship me without reproach,  
And burn a fragrant lamp before my bones,  
When I am gathered to the glorious Saints.”

The essence of the Catholic faith is not “the torpidity of assurance,” but the working out of one’s salvation in fear and trembling. That pride should sometimes gain entrance into the cloister and assume the garb of humility is no doubt true; but the self-renunciation which is the true spirit of the cloister, giving up all for the service of God, is in itself a mantle of virtue—a seamless garment of grace which neither the false satire of a Tennyson nor the flashlight of a Browning monologue can transform from a beauteous raiment of light.

It is true that the same pen which gave us “St. Simeon” gave us also these beautiful lines in “St. Agnes’ Eve,” a poem which is stirred with the loveliness and tenderness of religious life. St. Agnes on the very eve of death utters these ecstatic words in beatific vision:

“He lifts me to the golden doors;  
The flashes come and go;  
All heaven bursts her starry floors,  
And strews her lights below,  
And deepens on and up! The gates  
Roll back, and far within  
For me the heavenly Bridegroom waits  
To make me pure of sin.  
The Sabbaths of Eternity,  
One Sabbath deep and wide—  
A light upon the shining sea—  
The Bridegroom with his bride.”

The student, before accepting Tennyson’s poetic or, more correctly, satiric picture of the hermits of the desert in the early centuries of the Church as represented in “St. Simeon Stylites,” would do well to study the condition of the Christian, or rather pagan, world at the time when the hermits fled to the desert. It is a remote period in the life of the world, and like all remote periods you must translate yourself into it if you would clearly and justly understand it. But we warn you that Kingsley’s “Hermits” will not enlighten you.

Catholics have no need to apologize for the life or policy of their Church during its reign of nineteen hundred years. It is a book open to the world, and every chapter in it is a record of the spiritual and intellectual progress of man. There have been, indeed, twilight epochs—spiritual eclipses—when man seemed to forget his divine destiny; but the Church of God still stood at her altars waiting for her people to kneel—waiting for the “*Introibo ad altare Dei*” to reach the heart of king and noble, peasant and slave.

Therefore as a student of history and literature we protest against every misrepresentation of Catholic truth, whether within the pages of history, fiction or poetry, no matter who may be its author—a professor in one of our New World universities, a Marie Corelli counting her gains as she kneels at the shrine of a publisher, a Tennyson striking the chords of falsehood and “looking down towards Camelot,” or a Browning constructing his little monologue chapel



by the wayside to seduce from Catholic truth his poetic pilgrim—it is ever misrepresentation wearing the specious garb of truth, whether it be in history or fiction or poetry teaching falsehood.

THE STUDY AND INTERPRETATION  
OF LITERATURE

## THE STUDY AND INTERPRETATION OF LITERATURE.

The study of literature has of late years become somewhat sane and rational in its aim and purpose. There was a time, and that not very long ago, when literature was forced to yield up its spirit in the class-room to mere analysis or a talk about grammar, philology, rhetoric and sundry other irrelevant subjects.

To-day, however, in the best schools and colleges, this vicious method, which has for years worked destruction to true literary culture, has pretty well died out; nor is a through ticket by flying express down the centuries from Chaucer to Tennyson any longer regarded as satisfactory evidence that the privileged passenger knows much of the glory which nestles on the way.

How any person can hope to become a literary scholar in the highest and best sense of the word without assimilating the INFORMING life of literature has always seemed to us a problem in dire need of solution. We can well understand how one may possess himself of the literature of knowledge without such assimilation, but how he can become possessed of the literature of power without responding to the inner life of an art product, is to us a question incomprehensible.

Nor has the old spirit, we fear, been fully and wholly exorcised, as yet, from the class and lecture room. There are still to be found those who believe that the analytical exegesis of literature should be the main purpose of the teacher—that to elucidate the intellectual thought which articulates a poem, precipitating it from a concrete creation into a barren abstraction—this and this alone should be the aim and end of all literary study in the school or lecture room.

The fault with such persons is, that they do not fully understand and appreciate the true meaning and import of literature, mistaking its lesser coefficient for its chief and primary one. No definition of literature can be at all adequate which does not take into consideration the spiritual element as a factor. The late Brother Azarias, whose study of literature was most profound, clear and sympathetic, gives us a definition in the very opening chapter of his charming little volume, "A Philosophy of Literature," which is entirely satisfactory. He regards literature as the verbal expression of man's affections, as acted upon in his relations with the material world, society and his Creator. Literature may therefore be defined as the expression in letters of the spiritual co-operating with the intellectual man, the former being the dominant coefficient.

Knowing, then, that the spiritual element constitutes the INFORMING life of a poem, how can teachers fritter their time away with brilliant analytics which do little or nothing for true literary culture? Better, far better, that the students under their charge be turned loose in some library—there to browse at will, free to follow their literary tastes and inclinations.

We have long considered that examinations for certificates and degrees are for the most part a detriment to literary studies—that they dull the finer faculties of appreciation and magnify the importance of mere acquisition. Assuredly, when a young man finds that in order to reach his diploma or degree he must be able to discuss the Elizabethan English as found in Shakespeare's "Macbeth" and "As You Like It," or trace the gerundial infinitive through Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," he will pay little heed to either the spirit of Shakespeare or Chaucer as embodied in their works.

In our great eagerness to fill our heads with facts, without any co-ordination, we lose sight amid the stress and strain of our educational work of the ONE GREAT FACT: That if we would be wisely educated, we must seek it on the basis of a maximum of education with a minimum of acquirement. It is impossible to play fast and loose with the spirit of literature and not suffer for our insincerity. Literature is a jealous mistress and will brook no rival. Those who woo her must come with clean hearts and minds, setting aside all thought of mercenary returns, for, as Mrs. Browning says:

“We get no good

In being ungenerous, even to a book,  
And calculating profits—so much help  
By so much reading. It is rather when  
We gloriously forget ourselves and plunge  
*Soul-forward*, headlong into a book’s profound  
Impassion’d for its beauty and salt of truth—  
’Tis then we get the right good from a book.”

Another fault which characterizes the literary studies of to-day is, that we grasp at too much, and not a little that we fain would compass is, as far as literary training and culture are concerned, entirely unimportant. A few great literary personages—epochal men—who have handed the intellectual torch down the centuries—these are worthy of a devoted study. We think it is Ruskin who says that he who knows the history of Rome, Venice, Florence, Paris and London has a full knowledge of medieval and modern civilization. Twenty authors are not many, still they largely cover the great masterpieces of poetic thought, both ancient and modern. Homer, Virgil and Dante, Calderon, Molière and Goethe, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth and Tennyson—these contain much of the best poetic thought in all ages, and yet we have but named little more than half of the twenty. There is a flood of ephemeral literature—chiefly novels—day by day deluging the land, which fashion and frivolity set up for literary study. How much harm these novels do, lashing with their waves the moral shores of life. God alone knows. To-day, in the minds of many, the novel has supplanted the Bible, and the ethics of George Eliot take precedence of the Sermon on the Mount. It is doubtful if either Cardinal Newman or John Ruskin ever read a line of Tolstoi, Ibsen or Kipling, and yet both hold respectable places in literature.

Passing now from the subject of literature in itself to a consideration of its interpretation, we desire to touch upon a subject of vital import: The Vocal Interpretation of Literature. The spiritual element in a poem is indefinite and cannot be formulated in terms of x and y. No examination on paper, be it ever so thorough, can satisfactorily reach it. The only full response to this spiritual element, this essential life of a poem, that can be secured by the teacher is through a vocal rendering of it. But before he is capable of doing so he must first have sympathetically assimilated the INFORMING life of the poem. This is why no person need hope to become a great reader without a deep and sympathetic study of literature, nor a great interpreter of literature—which means a great teacher of literature—without the vocal capabilities requisite for voicing the indefinite or spiritual element which constitutes the soul of an art product. A true literary scholar is one who grows soulward. It is not enough that he store his mind with intellectual facts, he should grow vitalized at every point of his soul in his literary studies.

“Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell.”

Knowledge is of the intellect, wisdom and reverence of the soul. We should aim, in our study of literature, to pierce through the show of things—to reach the vital, quickening, spiritual element, by breaking through the baffling and perverting mesh of words which hide and blind it. How true are the lines of the late Poet Laureate:

“I sometimes hold it half a sin  
To put in words the thoughts I feel,  
For words, like nature, half reveal  
And half conceal the soul within.”

Herein, then, comes the office of the voice in literary interpretation—to aid in laying bare the soul within. When the same time is given in preparing the voice for the high office of literary interpretation that is now devoted to it in preparation for the operatic and concert stage, then we may look for the best and highest results in literary study. Then, indeed, will the throbbing pulse of poetry be felt in the class and lecture room, and the divine infection of inspiration will do its benign work, cheating the lazy and indifferent student of his hours and days.

Many make the mistake of believing that they may become capable vocal interpreters of literature in a month or a year, whereas the great work should cover a lifetime. Professor Corson, of Cornell University, who is acknowledged to be the ablest vocal interpreter of literature in America, once told the writer that he had made it a custom to read aloud for an hour each day for more than twenty-five years. Those who have been privileged to hear Professor Corson interpret vocally the great masterpieces of poetic literature, as found in Shakespeare, Tennyson, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Milton and Browning, can better understand and appreciate the true value of vocal culture as a factor in the great work of literary interpretation.

If we could combine the voice work of our best schools of elocution and oratory with the fullest and most comprehensive courses in literature found in our best universities, we might soon hope for the very summit of literary culture and training. The worst of our elocution schools are a positive injury to vocal training as a worthy factor in the interpretation of literature, inasmuch as they induce both superficiality and artificiality, their chief ambition being to graduate pretty girls with pretty gowns who can recite some catch-penny piece of current literature, before an assemblage of admiring friends, according to the numbers or lines upon an elocutionary chart or fashion plate. When these graduates leave their schools after a six months' course, all equipped and prepared to voice the depths of Shakespeare, the heights of Milton, or the zigzag involutions of Browning, they never fail, also, as a rule, to carry with them the brand or trade-mark of their respective manufactories.

In the best of our elocution schools, such as are found in Boston, Philadelphia and New York, where saner and more thorough methods are pursued and a certain measure of literary scholarship finds a habitation and a name, respectable attention is given to some of the chief masterpieces of literature, and a graduate knows something more than the scrappy selections found in a few recitation books.

Still the aim of all these schools is to turn out readers and teachers of reading, and this very

aim precludes a deep, serious and comprehensive study of literature.

In many of our leading colleges and universities there is a professor of oratory, who trains young men for declamation and intercollegiate contests in oratory and debate, but here again the aim determines the character and limitations of the work done. The most suitable department for voice training in a college or university is that of English literature, for it is as needful in the dramas of Shakespeare as in the orations of Webster and Burke; as requisite in the lyrics of Moore, Burns and Longfellow as in the glorious epics of Homer, Dante and Milton; as potent in the sonnets of Cowper and Wordsworth as in the tender elegies of a Shelley, an Arnold or a Tennyson.

But what about the vocal interpretation of literature in our primary and intermediate schools—in our academies preparatory to college and university work? It is here where the great work of vocal culture should begin—and begin in earnest, too. But it should never be pursued as an accomplishment or means of frivolous display. The aim should be, in every class, the adequate voicing of literary thought. Teachers will find in the voice an invaluable aid in the work of interpreting, particularly lyrics.

The lyric being subjective, and its very lifeblood being feeling, a sympathetic vocal interpretation of it will give a better insight into its poetic moment or inspirational thought, around which centres the whole structure, than hours of sentence chopping and phrase stitching. For the purpose of illustrating this fact let us take Tennyson's exquisite lyric, "Break, Break, Break," which embodies or crystallizes a mood. Here is the delightful little gem:

"Break, break, break,  
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!  
And I would that my tongue could utter  
The thoughts that arise in me.

"O well for the fisherman's boy  
That he shouts with his sister at play!  
O well for the sailor-lad,  
That he sings in his boat on the bay.

"And the stately ships go on  
To their haven under the hill;  
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still!

"Break, break, break,  
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!  
But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
Will never come back to me."

It will be remembered that this lyric, as well as another poem, "In the Valley of Caunteretz," though not contained in the linked elegy of "In Memoriam," are practically a part of it, and are co-radical as to their subject of inspiration—the sorrow borne by Tennyson for young Hallam. Here are the lines of the second poem:

“All along the valley, stream that flashest white,  
Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,  
All along the valley, where thy waters flow,  
I walked with one I loved two and thirty years ago.  
All along the valley, while I walk’d to-day,  
The two and thirty years were a mist that rolls away;  
For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed,  
Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead.  
And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,  
The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.”

It is easy to find the poetic moment in the first lyric, as it may be seen and FELT at once that the whole poem-thought centres around the inspirational lines:

“But O for the touch of a vanished hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still.”

We have seen an examination paper strewn with questions upon this lyric, among them being one asking for the reason why the first line, “Break, break, break,” is shorter in the number of its feet than the others which follow. As well ask for the reason of the permanency of parental or filial affection. The question is entirely gratuitous to one who has assimilated the poem in its essential life and can voice it properly. To those who have not responded, or, worse, cannot respond, to the INFORMING life of the lyric, a technical answer is of as much value as are many of the treatises that assume to deal with the subject of versification. But enough. Let the reader be assured of one thing: That the vocal interpretation of literature is in every way a subject worthy of his attention, and that he is the best interpreter of literature whose every faculty is fully developed—not the least of which is the voice—and who brings to his work a full and vitally spiritualized life.

Now as to the best method of taking up the study of literature—and we refer particularly to that department of it known as poetry—in our primary and secondary schools and colleges, why, we should say that the less method put into the work the better. For indeed there is no best method in the study and interpretation of literature. A poem being a work of art, the approach to it must be along the same lines as is the approach to every work of art.

As a matter of fact, no two interpreters of literature—we use the word interpreter here rather than that of teacher, since the study of literature is entirely subjective—will ever approach a poem along exactly the same lines. Why? Because the poem makes to each a different appeal. Nothing is truer than the statement that you get out of a poem what you bring to it. But the teacher of literature should ever remember that the primary purpose in the study of poetry is not discipline and instruction but exaltation and inspiration.

Dr. Hamilton Mabie, the well-known American critic and author, writing upon the study of poetry, says: “So much has been said of late years about methods of literary study that we are in danger of missing the ends of that study; in the multiplication of mechanical devices of all kinds and in the elaboration of systems the joy which ought to flow from a true work of art escapes us, and we are disciplined and instructed where we ought to be exalted and inspired. There are other studies which train the mind and impart information; the study of poetry ought

to do more; it ought to liberate the imagination and enrich the spirit of the student.”

Dr. Corson, now Professor Emeritus of English Literature at Cornell University, N.Y., to whom reference has already been made, whose sympathetic interpretation of poetry will remain a gift and memory to every student who has ever had the rare privilege of sharing in his instruction and enjoying the fine infection of his inspiring lectures, has this to say with respect to the study of poetry: “In studying a poem with a class of students, the purpose being literary culture (that is, spiritual culture), the aim of the teacher should be to hold the minds of the class up as near as possible, which at best may not be very near, to the height of the poet’s thought and feeling. He should carefully avoid loosening, so to speak, more than there is need the close texture of the language; for it is all-important that the student should be encouraged to think and feel as far as he is able in the idealized language of the higher poetry.”

Nor should it be forgotten that much of our best poetry is expressed under the form of a symbol. Take, for instance, Longfellow’s little simple lyric, “Excelsior.” Think you that the full meaning of that poem lies upon the surface? Instead of representing the failure of a youth climbing the Alpine peaks of life, does the poem not rather represent the triumph of a soul over all earthly difficulties, freed from every worldly allurements? Is not the voice we hear at the close “from the sky serene and far” but the voice of triumphant immortality?

If the student would indeed know what poetry really means, and what is its function, and what the office of a poet, he should read Tennyson’s “The Poet’s Mind” and “The Lady of Shalott,” the Fifth Book of Mrs. Browning’s “Aurora Leigh,” and her “Musical Instrument,” and Browning’s poem, “Popularity.” In nearly all these poems the meaning is expressed in symbol.

Another thing to remember in the interpretation of poetry is that its value is constant; nor has it one message or meaning for the boy and another for the man. But in order that this may be realized it would be well to take up first for interpretation in the classes the poets whose work is chiefly confined to the lyric, the idyl and the ballad, and leave for mature years—the years of philosophic thought—the study of poets of the more complex and philosophic school.



# THE DEGRADATION OF SCHOLARSHIP

## THE DEGRADATION OF SCHOLARSHIP.

Nothing is more evident in this our day than the degradation to which scholarship is subjected at the hands of certain so-called educators. Indeed, it has become a malady which sooner or later must prove fatal to the life and welfare of the body educational. How could it be otherwise when pedantry with all its assumption and presumption usurps the throne of scholarship, and true culture often finds but little welcome in the class-rooms and academic halls of our land?

Nor is this an exaggerated picture of the educational conditions which obtain right here in the Province of Ontario. No person at all acquainted with the character of work done in our primary and secondary schools but knows that in many respects it is not only inferior, but that much that bears the name of scholarship is only the merest pedantry tricked out in the feathers and pomp of a school curriculum.

Should you ask for a proof of this statement you have but to visit with an open and unbiased mind the primary and secondary schools of our Province and learn for yourself of their lack of efficiency in the foundation subjects of reading, writing, composition and spelling.

Should your desire lead you further to ascertain something of the character of the work that is being done in the departments of what may be designated culture subjects, such as Latin, French and German, you will quickly find proof that here it is pedantry rather than scholarship which obtains.

As to the subject of reading, it is conceded on all sides that it is badly taught in both the Public and High Schools, and that along this line little progress has been made for a number of years. The High School teachers lay the blame for this at the door of the Public Schools, alleging that the pupils read very badly when they enter the High Schools, forgetting meantime that the charge recoils upon themselves, since the teachers of the Public Schools are the product of the High Schools.

The fault lies in the fact that neither teachers nor inspectors of Public or High Schools in Ontario have had any training in the subject of reading; or, if they have had, it has only been along the line of barren and worthless theorizing. This is borne out by the fact that teachers who have from time to time boldly ventured to prepare manuals of reading have not been able to apply their own principles, and as readers or vocal interpreters of literature have been and are pronounced failures.

If the teacher whose spirit has been quickened by the deeper sympathies and experiences of life cannot read, how, pray, can you expect the boy or girl to do so? If "Learn by doing" is pedagogically of great value to the pupil, should it not be of equal value to the teacher?

Now turn we for a moment to the subject of composition, and what do we find? A condition which reveals manifest defects in its teaching. We can readily put our finger on its weak spots, and with Goethe say, "Thou ailest here and ailest there." In the first place, the translations in the secondary schools from Greek, Latin, French and German authors are so badly done, so inaccurately done, so inelegantly done, that what should be a daily practice in English composition in the construction of sentences and paragraphs, the disposal of phrases, and the choice of the exact word, becomes almost worthless. The introduction of no fad like oral composition will or can compensate for this.

Again, while the Public and High Schools are being provided with libraries—in many instances quite an unnecessary expense being entailed—little direction is given to the reading, and pupils gabble thoughtlessly through books in mental gallop from chapter to chapter without adding to the capital of their scholarship a single new thought or idea, or to their vocabulary a single new word. Was it not at a convention of teachers, held but a short time ago in an Ontario city, that a Public School teacher boasted of the fact that one of his pupils had read sixty books in three months? And not a teacher present—not even the Inspector—protested.

Then, too, in many cases the teachers cannot teach composition, since they cannot write themselves. What does a teacher know about sentence or paragraph construction, or the logical and artistic expression of thought, who has never served his time as an apprentice in the great laboratory of composition? It is but a few years since a leading Canadian journalist told the writer that among the letters sent to his paper many of the worst and most faulty came from teachers.

Lastly, the study of literature, which should be an auxiliary to composition, nay, be its right arm, is often such in our schools as to aid the student but little in the work of composition.

There yet remain to be considered, of the foundation subjects, writing and spelling. Perhaps nowhere else in the world can be found as many slovenly and bad writers as here in the schools of Ontario. Go to England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany or Switzerland, and you will find that a boy or girl of fifteen years of age writes a hand marvellously clear and legible. Why is this? Because in Europe its importance is emphasized, and it counts for quite as much in the estimate of acquirements as arithmetic or grammar or history or geography. We also know of no word in the school vocabulary of Europe—in any language—that exactly corresponds in meaning to our word for school exercise book—“scribbler.” Sometimes a word when traced to its origin is very significant.

Now just here it will be well, lest it might be thought that we are making statements without any facts to support them, to quote from the official report of McGill University matriculation examination held at Montreal and the various examining centres of Canada in June, 1908. Touching the subjects of writing and spelling, the chief examiner in his report says: “The handwriting of some of the candidates was so unformed and untidy that it was hard to believe that the writers were actually candidates at a matriculation examination. Certainly such candidates will stand a poor chance of being accepted should they look for any employment in which writing is a factor. It is regrettable that a number of papers otherwise excellent showed conspicuous lapses in this particular. This will explain to some candidates thoroughly well up in their subject why their marks were not high. A word of warning might be given them that if they wish to have a high standing in English when they come to college they must give their days and nights to the study of the spelling-book—or the dictionary, perhaps, for there are no spelling-books nowadays.” This is frank criticism, and if hearkened to by schools and colleges cannot but prove a benefit educationally. There is no attempt here to consider the work of the examiner as “confidential.” Such criticism is, indeed, the basis of progress.

But pray enter the temple of higher studies and see what we find. Assuredly the work done in Latin is not thorough. How could it be so when a course that demands six or eight years of study in Old World schools is completed here in three? Is it any wonder that the Canadian matriculant, when pursuing his classical studies at the University, ever lives on intimate terms with his “crib” or “pony”? How extensive can be the vocabulary of a student in Latin whose class work has covered but four thirty-minute spaces a week for three years? What will be his

grasp of the Latin grammar? During his third year he has been “sight reading.” Is he really prepared for such work at the end of the second year? It is quite true that “sight reading,” or translation without preparation, is excellent practice in the study of any language, but does it not presuppose a solid grounding in the grammar and a wide vocabulary? The boy’s teacher, fresh from the academic halls of his alma mater, has pathetically bid farewell to his “crib” or “pony,” and now goes out into the cold classical world alone to teach “sight reading” to his class, that have been tiptoed into Latin. What is the result? In most instances the work is worthless—a loss of time which could have been far better devoted to the Latin grammar or the extension of his vocabulary. But it looks well, you know, in a High School curriculum.

In the department of modern languages—that is to say, French and German—a still worse condition exists. After a three or four years’ course in those languages in an Ontario High School, what does the student carry away? The ability, think you, to converse in those languages, to write them and read them easily? Not at all. Though in many cases the students have been taught by so-called specialists, their accent in reading French or German is in most instances unlike that of either “Christian, pagan or man.” They have prepared for an examination and have passed. That is all.

The purpose in studying modern languages in Europe is to be able to speak and write them with ease. Here gabbling through syntax and making application of its rules to the prescribed text seem to constitute the chief aim in their study. Indeed, an Ontario teacher who went to Europe a couple of years ago for the purpose of taking a summer course in modern languages complained on his return that over there too much attention was given to the speaking of the languages and not enough to the grammar. He was probably disappointed with Old World scholarship, finding that it was so devoid of pedantry. No doubt grammar has its place, but its role is a secondary one in the acquisition of any modern language.

Let us for a moment consider next how the important subject of history is taught in our secondary schools. No one will deny how large a place this subject should hold in a curriculum of well ordered studies in either a High School or a University. For what is history but a record of the activities of the human race, and to have a thorough knowledge of this is in itself equivalent to a liberal education.

But the student who pursues a course in history in the High Schools of Ontario is beset with a double danger—that of endeavoring to cover too much ground and thereby getting but a superficial knowledge of the facts and great movements of history, and that of basing his judgments on data drawn from only one source.

The course in history, as at present constituted in the High School curriculum of Ontario, comprises five years. Now, certainly a good deal should be done in that time, but it would be the sheerest folly to think that any boy or girl could within that time gain even a fair knowledge of the history of Greece, Rome, Canada, England, medieval and modern Europe. This tiptoeing the pupils in history is not a whit better than tiptoeing them in Latin, French or German. Indeed, we are not sure but it works greater harm to true scholarship. We are living in an age when education is becoming so widely diffused that scholarship as a consequence is becoming very superficial and thin.

As we write we have before us the Syllabus of the Ontario High School Course in Medieval and Modern History. It briefly outlines the scope of the work to be done and gives a list of books to be consulted as works of reference. Now, the scientific method of studying history warns you to take nothing for granted. First you must verify the facts by examining the witnesses that testify to these facts. Secondly, you must properly appreciate or value these

facts from the point of view of principles that ought to govern human actions, and thirdly, these facts should be explained by going back to the causes, whether particular or general, that produced them. That is, the scientific method in history requires, first, verification; secondly, appreciation or valuation; and thirdly, explanation of historic facts.

In a High School it is true there is not sufficient time for historical research or investigation, but there is sufficient time to study a question on more than one side; there is sufficient time to be honest; there is sufficient time to prefer truth to falsehood; and where in a mooted point the policy and teachings of the Catholic Church are involved there should be sufficient time and sufficient honesty to consult authors who know whereof they write. Take for example the history of the Middle Ages. Without a thorough and correct knowledge of the policy, teachings and work of the Catholic Church, how, I ask, may the student hope to follow and understand the great movements of history in those centuries? In the first place, the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages was the bulwark of sovereignty, law and order, the founder of universities, the patron of letters, the inspiration of art, the shield of the oppressed, and a very staff and guide to the halting and stumbling steps of civilization. She was knowledge, she was authority, she was order, she was reverence.

Taking up now the books of reference recommended in the Syllabus of the High School Course in Medieval and Modern History in Ontario, we find the work of but one Catholic author on the reference list—"English Monastic Life," by Dom Gasquet, the Benedictine. Is this not truly a one-sided study of history that obtains in the secondary schools of Ontario? Yet the teachers of history in those schools are supposed to be broad-minded and cultured men. Why, then, should they refuse to read the Catholic point of view in the study of historical periods and historical movements in which the Catholic Church was the greatest factor?

It will not do to say that Catholic authors are not available. Translations have been made of many of the most valuable works in medieval and modern history written by leading Catholic scholars of Europe. We usually find what we look for. Why, for instance, not put on the list of reference books the lives of St. Benedict, St. Dominic, St. Francis and St. Ignatius written by members of their own communities? They should best understand the meaning, spirit and purpose of the religious society in which they live. Why not put on the list the great German historian Jansen's work dealing with the history of Germany on the eve of the Lutheran revolt, or Father Denifle's monumental work, "The Life of Luther"? For the beginnings of Christianity why not put on the list Dr. Shahan's excellent studies in this subject, as well as his scholarly work on the Middle Ages? For a study of the Thirteenth Century, which saw the founding of the medieval university, the rise of the Gothic cathedral, the development of scholastic philosophy, the birth of Dante, the world's greatest epic poet, the composition of the great Latin hymns, the foundation of great libraries, and the origin of democracy, Christian socialism and self-government, is there a better work of reference than Dr. J. J. Walsh's "The Thirteenth, Greatest of Centuries"? Why, then, not put it on the list? And beside this, why not put on the list Pastor's "Lives of the Popes Since the Close of the Middle Ages"?

If the purpose in the study of history be to reach truth, why accept in the court of history the testimony of but one set of witnesses? Such a proceeding is neither judicial nor just. It would not be permitted in the law courts of our land; why, then, permit it in the history courts of our schools and colleges?

Nor is this *ex-parte* study of history more obvious in the curriculum of the High Schools of Ontario than is the objectionable character of many of the poems that are assigned for literary study. In the selections from Browning of last year this choice stanza greeted the Catholic

pupils in their study and appreciation of “Up at a Villa—Down in the City”:

“Or a sonnet with flowery marge to the Reverend Don So and So,  
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, St. Jerome and Cicero.  
‘And moreover’ (the sonnet goes rhyming), ‘the skirts of St. Paul has reached,  
Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous than ever he preached.’  
Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession! our Lady borne smiling and smart  
With a pink gauze gown all spangles and seven swords stuck in her heart!  
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, tootle-te-tootle the fife;  
No keeping one’s haunches still: it’s the greatest pleasure in life.”

It may, we think, be legitimately questioned whether either the study in our secondary schools of a one-sided presentation of the facts of history or the interpretation of poems which ridicule the tenets and ceremonies of any Church conduces to that breadth of scholarship and culture and to the upbuilding of that large-minded Canadian citizenship which we all so heartily desire in our land.

Is it not on the plea that these higher institutions of learning—High Schools and Normal Schools—are broad and just and free from prejudice in their teaching that the Roman Catholic Separate School System has been persistently denied by successive Governments in this Province the right to develop beyond an elementary status, though this right is manifestly inherent or implied in the very pact which made provision for the establishment of Separate Schools for the minorities in the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario. The Government of Quebec has recognized the right; the Government of Ontario refuses to do so.

Now a word as to certain conditions educational which prevail in Ontario and which have not only led to abuses but are contributing factors to the degradation of scholarship as well as to the debasement of the teaching profession.

And first of these is the system of creating “specialists”—a system or method which has not scholarship as its basis. Why should a university graduate whose average is sixty-six per cent. in his examinations be regarded as having the academic standing for a specialist, while the graduate whose average is sixty per cent., though he may have pursued post-graduate work for two or three years, is refused this standing? How large a part does not mere memory play in examination percentages? If specialism were based upon the post-graduate work of one, two or three years it would have some meaning or value, but as it exists to-day in Ontario it is largely a sham.

Then as regards the professional qualifications of a specialist, are they not almost wholly based upon the opinion of an examiner or inspector? Now this opinion may be worth a good deal; it may be worth very little; it may be worth nothing. As a matter of fact the High School inspectors of a few years ago often differed as widely as the poles in their estimate or rating of the High School teachers of this Province, and the High School inspectors of to-day are rating teachers high who had been marked low by the former inspectors.

And what shall be said of educational officials who, lacking a fine sense of duty, dignity and honor, have been playing the part of educational Warwicks in the Province, crowning and uncrowning, making and unmaking teachers, now in one part of Ontario, now in another? We endeavor to keep education out of politics, while gross partisanship is doing its work.

With such conditions educational in our Province, need we wonder that during the past year an inspector refused to permit a French-Canadian girl who held a Normal School Entrance

and Normal School Professional Certificate to teach in a school where three-fourths of the children are of French-Canadian origin? Either the Normal School staff, in granting that French-Canadian girl a certificate to teach, did not know what they were doing, or the inspector exceeded his authority. Look at it as you will, the matter is discreditable.

For how, we ask, may the teacher be expected to grow and reach out towards higher things if he be not permitted to enjoy the very first conditions of growth—the right to develop and advance by virtue of his own gifts and toil? Who stands between the lawyer and the acceptance of his brief? Who stands between the physician and the diagnosis of his case? We speak of the dignity of scholarship and the dignity of the teaching profession, but if the law of development be thwarted and its attendant right to advancement be denied, degradation, not dignity, would be the fitting term.

THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE AND  
THE POPES OF AVIGNON



## THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE AND THE POPES OF AVIGNON.

There is probably no other period in the history of the world in which the attitude of the Papacy toward art and letters has been so misrepresented by certain writers as that of the Italian Renaissance. If one takes up the works of such well-known historians of this period as Pastor, Burckhardt and Symonds, the conflict of opinion is so great that one almost despairs of getting at the real truth.

The charm of style in the work of Symonds is so seductive that for the moment misrepresentation and contradiction pass unheeded and one is swept along a current of rhetoric, dazzled now by the coloring of thought, now by the very atmosphere which rests upon the art headlands and uplands of this transition period.

The Italian Renaissance flowered during the fifteenth century, but it drew its nutrition from the soil of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The spirit of free inquiry and delight in beauty which are especially credited as belonging to the Italian Renaissance had a place in the life and art of Italy as well as France long before the fifteenth century.

The Catholic Church has during no century prohibited free inquiry on questions that pertain to science, art and letters, and the expression of her life as represented in art and literature is but the reflection of that beauty which emanates from the source of all beauty—God.

It is not only unjust to the Catholic Church, but it betrays as well a superficial knowledge of the basis and genesis of Christian art to maintain that all great poetry, painting, architecture, sculpture and music had first soil in the wilderness of the world rather than within the sanctuary of God. So it is that certain historians, for example, turn their faces in every direction seeking causes for the great awakening of life and art in Italy during the fifteenth century, but are absolutely blind to the light and influence which streamed from the centre and headship of Christianity.

These historians would fain have us believe that the Popes of the Renaissance set their faces like flint against the revival of letters—that they feared it would emancipate the human intellect from the power of the Church. Indeed, as has been elsewhere pointed out, Putnam, in his work dealing with the making of books during the medieval centuries, states in two paragraphs, in almost successive pages, that the Pope had a certain work burned “because it was *contra bonos mores*”; and, again, that the Roman Curia looked on and smiled approvingly at such a work because it was not contrary to faith. The real truth is that the Catholic Church was the greatest factor in the Renaissance movement, and he who would understand the forces that contributed to this great awakening of the human intellect, and the development of art and letters which followed logically in its train, must understand the beginnings of the Renaissance in the fourteenth century and the share which the Popes of Avignon—then in exile—took in its promotion and extension.

The poet Petrarch is justly styled the “Father of Humanism,” but were it not for the influence, kindly offices and patronage of the Papal Court of Avignon, the sweetest of Italian sonneteers might have lived unheeded—obscure in a lonely villa of Parma or Verona.

Let us, then, examine the share which the Popes of Avignon justly have in this great

movement which filled the world of Italy of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as with the glory of a new and dazzling sunrise.

It should not be forgotten that the revival of classical learning in Italy really began early in the twelfth century with the revival of the study of Roman law. Italy was heir to the mid-day splendor of Roman literature, with its Virgils, its Horaces, its Ciceros, its Quintilians. Not only this, but as Carducci says, "By the fall of Constantinople Italy became sole heir and guardian of the ancient civilization of Greece."

But it is a mistake to consider that it was the discovery of some manuscripts by Petrarch at Verona, or the appointment of Manuel Chrysoloras to the chair of Greek at the Florence University in 1396, that set aglow the skies of the Italian Renaissance.

A writer tells us that the growth of civilization is as gradual and imperceptible as that of an oak tree. It does not suddenly pass from night to day, not even from night to twilight. So was the Renaissance in Italy ushered in slowly, and the factors which contributed to this great intellectual awakening were indeed many.

Now, not the least of these factors was the Papal Court, whether its influence went out from Rome or Avignon. It seems to us strange—nay, absurd—that historians of the Italian Renaissance eagerly gather up every vagrant straw that may contribute to their theory as to the cause of the great intellectual awakening of Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but absolutely ignore the influence of the Catholic Church as a potent force in the Renaissance movement.

Non-Catholic historians are fond of quoting the Latin poet's words: "*Nihil humani est mihi alienum*," and hold that it was out of this spirit—this attitude towards the world and mankind—that the Italian Renaissance was born. This is quite true, but as Guiraud points out in his admirable work, "*L'Eglise et Les Origines de la Renaissance*," the need of simplifying and generalizing—of studying man in himself rather than any man in particular—could find recognition in the classical spirit only because it already existed in the spirit of the Renaissance.

One thing is quite certain, that it was the relation of the Papal Court to the Greek Church at Constantinople and the religious controversies that took place during the fourteenth century between Avignon and Constantinople that gave an impetus to the study of the Greek Fathers, a large number of whose works were in the Papal library at Avignon. In fact, relations of friendship bound together the men of letters of Avignon and Constantinople in such manner that there was often an exchange of manuscripts between the East and West. The life of Petrarch furnishes examples of this.

From the very beginning of the Papal occupancy of Avignon the Vicars of Christ enriched the library of the Holy See with numerous copies of the works of the Latin and Greek writers—now the works of Seneca, Pliny, Sallust, Suetonius and Cicero, now the Ethics of Aristotle and the Poems of Virgil.

As to theological works written in Greek, it was most natural that at a time when theology reigned incontestably as the chief of the sciences the Papal Library was well supplied.

It is true that the great masterpieces of Greek literature, such as the works of Homer, Hesiod and Pindar, the great tragedies, and the Latin writers, Horace and Tacitus, were not as yet well represented in the Papal Library at Avignon, but it is equally true that on the eve of the great schism the Popes had collected together an important number of manuscripts in which Latin literature was well represented, so that in the number and quality of the volumes the Apostolic Library was second only to the ancient libraries of the Sorbonne and Canterbury.

In several of his letters the poet Petrarch has shown himself very severe towards the Popes

of the fourteenth century, who, in his eyes, were guilty of the double crime of being French and of having left Italy. Meanwhile the very literary reputation and glory which Petrarch loved so much were due in no small measure to the protection accorded him by the Popes of Avignon. Was it not, too, at the Papal Court of Avignon that Petrarch's father, an exile from Florence, had sought an asylum, and in the sunshine of whose favor the poet himself had grown in peace and security?

Nor should it be forgotten that it was from the Papal Curia of Avignon that the order first went out to search for the Latin manuscripts which were of so great service in the study of the ancient literature and language of Rome. The work of copying also went on, so that a manuscript copy of nearly every valuable Latin work was soon to be found in the Pontifical Library.

In collecting thus the scattered literary remains of antiquity the Popes gave proof of an enlightened taste for letters, while at the same time they favored the movement born of humanism. As in our own day, the Apostolic Library was thrown open to scholars, and the poet Petrarch, in several passages of his familiar letters, testifies to the fact that he himself had full access to the books and manuscripts of the Pontifical Library at Avignon.

Again, the missionary work carried on in Africa and Asia during the residence of the Popes at Avignon did much to bring in contact the mind of the Orient and the Occident. Towards the close of the thirteenth century, before the Papacy had yet removed to Avignon, the Franciscan Jean de Montecorvino had established flourishing Christian missions in China, and in 1306 Pope Clement V erected for him the see of Pekin. Numerous missions were also established in the Barbary States, in Northern Africa, as well as in Tunis.

If, then, the discovery of new worlds, the fall of Constantinople and the invention of printing were factors in the development of the Italian Renaissance, assuredly the mission work of the Papal Court of Avignon in its propagation of the gospel in distant countries contributed indirectly but incontestably to this great awakening of the human mind. Indeed, "humanism" may be said to have had birth at Avignon within the Pontifical Court, with him who has been justly designated "the first of Humanists"—the poet Petrarch.

As to the study of Greek in Italy, long before the dispersion of Greek scholars consequent on the fall of Constantinople in 1453, long, too, before the appointment of Manuel Chrysoloras to the chair of Greek at the Florence University in 1396, the monk Barlaam, a Greek scholar of great repute, a Calabrian by birth, who had passed his youth at Salonica and at Constantinople, where he became, thanks to his literary and scientific culture, a favorite of the Emperor Andronicus, was sent by the latter to propose to Benedict XII. a reunion of the Greek and Latin Churches.

On his return from Rome in 1342, where he had received the laurel crown of poetry, Petrarch found Barlaam at Avignon and requested from him lessons in Greek. Another instructor of the poet Petrarch in Greek was Nicolas Sigeros, also a Byzantine envoy to the Court of Avignon. When the latter had terminated his negotiations with Clement VI. and had to return to Constantinople, Petrarch made him promise that he would search for manuscripts of Cicero which might be hidden in the libraries of the Bosphorus. Sigeros, however, found none, but to show his good-will he sent to his friend of Avignon a copy of the poems of Homer.

It was Petrarch's different visits to Rome that inspired in him a love for antiquity. His first visit to the Eternal City was on the invitation of his friend, the Bishop of Lombez, in 1337, and it is from this year that his Roman patriotism dates, which henceforth inspires all his works and in particular his Latin poem, "Africa," and which, too, made him the enthusiastic friend of Rienzi.

A study of the life of Petrarch reveals the fact that it was the good offices of the Papal Court of Avignon which placed him in touch with the eminent Greek and Latin scholars of the day and made it possible for him, in the seclusion of Vaucluse, to pursue his studies of the great masters of Greek poetry and philosophy.

Petrarch also prevailed upon his friend Boccaccio to publish in Latin the Iliad and Odyssey. It was Leontius Pilatus who took charge of this work a little time after and thus began the great work of translating Greek authors which Pope Nicholas V. was later to bring to so successful an end.

But the works of the nature-loving Greeks would never have inspired in the heart and mind of Petrarch a love of the beauty of life around him—Hellenism was but a factor—were it not that his own beloved Provence revealed its charms to his eyes and filled his soul with poetic dreams. In his garden at Vaucluse, among his trees and vines, he found the inspiration which Nature never refuses to the open and responsive heart, whether the votary at her altar be a Wordsworth, amid the lakes and cliffs and scenes of Cumberland; a Burns, treading the hillsides of his native Ayr, or a Whittier, dreaming amid his Berkshire hills.

Many historians do an injustice to the character of Petrarch on the moral side. Petrarch, in the moral gospel of his life and living, was far from being either a Poggio or a Machiavelli. Much as was his respect for the master geniuses of antiquity, his love for the sacred writings of St. Jerome and St. Augustine was more profound, and it is said that on reading for the first time the works of the latter he thought of abandoning altogether the frivolous study of the classics, with a view of consecrating himself entirely to Christian meditation and reading. Petrarch's respect for the Christian ideal is to be found in the marginal annotations of his manuscripts. We have the poet's own word for it that he took the "Confessions of St. Augustine" for his model when he wrote his "De Contemptu Mundi." Practices of scrupulous piety marked his whole life. Each night he arose to pray to God, and on every Friday he practised a rigorous fast, while his devotion to the Blessed Virgin was most ardent and sincere.

It is true that, like all men of the Renaissance period, Petrarch was intense in his character. He hated with a Renaissance fervor, and he was not free from the jealousy and vainglory which belonged especially to the spirit of his times.

In estimating the character of Petrarch one must remember the spirit of the times in which he had birth—that it was an age of great virtues and great vices, and that excessive liberty to sin followed in the wake of the Renaissance in every land. In England it is reflected in the lives of such men as Green and Marlowe and in Marlowe's play of "Dr. Faustus," while in France the courts of the House of Valois and the camps of the Huguenots were marked by the greatest wantonness and license. In Germany men like Ulrich von Hutten were anything but moral.

Petrarch was certainly "the morning star" of the Italian Renaissance, but it was the Papal Court of Avignon that made possible his light—it was the Pope, as representative and head of a universal Church, that quickened by contact the mind of the East with the West—in a word, it was the enlightened scholarship of fourteen centuries illumined by the rays of Divine Faith and speaking through the lips of the Vicar of Christ in exile at Avignon that led the way in that greatest of intellectual movements—the Italian Renaissance of the Fifteenth Century.

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**Transcriber's Notes:**

Hyphenation, and spellings have been retained as in the original. Punctuation has been corrected without note.

[The end of *Essays Literary, Critical and Historical* by Thomas O'Hagan]