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English Literature in our Schools.
A paper read by Aaron Perry, M. A., at the
Carleton County Teachers' Institute.

CONTINUED.

While there are many things which must be taught in the literature lesson, which I have not mentioned here, yet I wish to impress on the teachers the necessity of doing much supplementary reading. Read to your class selections from some of our recent writers. They all enjoy the animal stories of C. G. D. Roberts and Seton. I think every boy ought to become acquainted with these two masters of English. The poems and writings of Roberts ought to appeal to every New Brunswick boy and girl. He is one of our own. The more he is read, the more he will be revered and loved. His animal stories are all elevating and must uplift our boys, as they became acquainted with "Our Kindred of the Wild." Then make them acquainted with others of our Canadian poets. It is hard perhaps to get a separate volume for each writer, but I hold in my hand, a volume entitled "Canadian Poems and Lyrics" edited by Prof. Lighthall of Montreal. Here we have poems by Roberts, Chas. Sangster, Arthur Weir, Chas. Mair, T. D'arcy McGee, Logan, Bliss Carman, Lampanan, and many others. They all deal with true Canadian life. Our pupils ought to be lead to appreciate our own poets.

On some bright sunny afternoon, permit them to go for a canoe sail with Roberts and Carman, on our lakes and streams, where they,

Have chased in wilful mood
The wood-ducks flapping brood.
Have spied the antlered moose
Cropping the young green spruce.

When the mad rapids chafe
They've shouted, steering safe,
With sinews tense, nerve keen
Shot thro' the roar, and seen,
With spirit wild as theirs,
The white waves leap like hares.

Then you ought to delight them with Whitcomb Riley, who is ever a joy to young hearts. Some of us have listened to Dr. Drummond, and have been thrilled. Introduce him to your pupils. And lastly I would refer you to the "Laureat of the Empire." Justly he has been so called. Our pupils ought to hear more from him than the Recessional. Don't let them imbibe the idea that he is a mere jingoist, even though he has been so styled by many of our neighbours. He is doing a mighty work for our English literature. His 4th volume of poetry "The Five Nations," has just appeared. Listen to the words of a noted American Professor.

"Here is Rudyard Kipling, unique among all living writers, following in the footsteps of no predecessor, and defying imitation. The most careless stanza that he pens, the very diamond dust that at any time he chances to let fall, is caught up eagerly by all, who speak and read our English tongue, and in the space of a single day, it is known throughout the four quarters of the globe. No other poet in his own life time, ever had whole nations ever struck so unerringly a responsive chord in men and women, who in all else are separated, and indifferent to one another.

He is the spirit of poetry itself, and the man who has the secret of it is a poet, not for his own contemporaries alone, but for all humanity and for all time."

A striking and forcible eulogy, I take it, coming as it does from the pen of an American.

Our pupil's should be lead to admire this 20th century poet. Let them see the heart of the great writer as he pens.

Could we but draw back the curtain
That surrounded each others lives,
See the naked heart and spirit,
Know what spur the action gives,
Often we should find it better
Purer than we judge we should,
We would love each other better
If we only understood.

Then see him as a patriot.
Take 'old o' the wings o' the mornin'
And flop round the world till you're dead,
But you can't get away from the tune that they play
To the bloomin' old rag over' ead.'

I might mention other writers, which could with profit be read and discussed, but you doubtless will make your own selections. Above all, in some measure, make your pupils acquainted with the great language, "so delicate, so flexible, so rich, so strong and so majestic."

I would not wish to close this paper, without a word to the teachers, concerning their own reading, and the formation of their own private libraries. Many of you are not permitted to the privileges of a public library, nor even of a circulating library. To you now chiefly I speak. "Since we are all teachers, therefore we are all readers." Am I warranted in drawing such a conclusion from such a hypothesis. Sincerely we hope, that our New Brunswick teachers are not to be classed with the "actors the stock brokers and the hunting men" as non-readers, as a noted English literary character has recently classed the teachers in the mother country.

"Books are true friends." We are very careful in selecting our friends, ought we not to be more careful in having the best books on our shelves?

As we can only touch the circumference of this vast circle, I wish only to speak of the very best in poetry and fiction, works which every teacher ought to read in order to become truly educated.

"It isn't necessary as many people suppose, to keep up with the additions to the Book Lover's Library" in order to be what is known as well read. Not to keep pace with the present, but to walk arm in arm with the past, the great classic past is really to be well read. To know the masters of literature is to be cultivated." Thus speaks one of our critics.

Which of the poets then shall we place in our library? Begin certainly with the day star of our literature, the great Geoffrey Chaucer. Read with vocabulary the Prologue and The Knights Tale. They will fascinate you. Coming down through the centuries, we stop at the great Elizabethan period. Shakespeare is the great luminary here. You certainly can't read all of Shakespeare. That is the work of a life time. But in some sense master such tragedies as Hamlet, Macbeth, Julius Caesar, the Merchant of Venice, also one or two of his comedies as "The Twelfth Night," and "As you like it."

After Shakespeare, Milton will naturally claim your attention. We at least should read his great epic, Paradise Lost and Regained. Some of his shorter poems such as L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Lycidas are beautiful. In order to get the best from the 17th to the 19th century, let me recommend a volume entitled "From Milton to Tennyson, edited by Prof. Syle of University of California. Here you will find selections from Dryden, Pope, Thomson, Johnson, Gray, Goldsmith, Cowper, Burns, Lord Byron, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Browning and Tennyson.

In reading such a book as this, you get but a vague idea of their writings. This will however serve you as an introduction. Bobby Burns, with his quaint wit and humor, and at the same time true philosophy of life will invite us. Lord Byron, the beauty, the profligate, the genius, gives us many a vivid picture in his Child Harold, as he leaves his own dear England, in disgust, a heart broken man, yet for a noble purpose. Keats and Shelley will make you almost celestial and ethereal. Your feet do not touch this cold material earth. Read Wordsworth because he is the great nature poet. His poetry is covered with such pictures,

"The rainbow comes and goes
And lovely is the Rose,
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair."

We now come to the two great geniuses of the last century, Robert Browning and Alfred Tennyson. Every teacher should have these writers in their libraries. They represent the true spirit of the 19th century in our great nation. Don't condemn Robert Browning before you know him. Read his lyrics and romances and become fascinated. Then proceed to his larger poems such as Paulina, Paracelsus, Easter Time, and become perhaps slightly puzzled. Then proceed to his greatest work "The Ring and the Book," a poem consisting of twelve different sections or chapters and aggregating 21000 lines. You will find it more interesting than any work of fiction you have ever read. Get acquainted with Brownings "Men and Women," by reading his works. If you have any prejudices they certainly will be removed. Tennyson needs no word of comment here, you all know him.

Of the English poetesses of the last century, I mention but one, Mrs. Browning. A writer has said: "That Mrs. Browning herself is the greatest of English poetesses, no one will deny. Probably most critics would allow her to stand among the greatest English poets of the 19th century, Tennyson, Browning, Scott, Shelley, Wordsworth. She is great, the greatest poetess, whose works we have, and that her goodness equals her genius is a cause for deep gratitude."

Of the great American poets, four alone might be mentioned Longfellow, Whittier, Bryant and Lowell.

We become lovers of poetry only by reading good poetry. I think I have at least mentioned some of the masters, and trust that you will add many more to your list.

FICTION.

I turn now to fiction. This will be a more inviting field as the majority of you enjoy the prose better than the poetry. Here again I will speak of only the great masters in the last century. We can only afford to read the best even in fiction. Fiction is the experimental side of human science says one writer, and again novels have been defined as the blossoms of literature.

Let me quote from Prof. Moulton, of Chicago University. In speaking of the novel he says: What per cent. of our novel-readers have ever read a novel twice? We all want to see a good picture ten times and more. The value of a novel increases with the square of the number of times it is read. Taste for fiction can be cultivated only by reading and re-reading the works of the great masters, with docile attention always, and sometimes with distinct effort and study. Fiction should never become a lissipation, but rather a mental and moral food.

If you wish to go into the 18th century

world of fiction, read such writers as, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne and Francis Berney. Of the 19th century novelists, Sir Walter Scott must be placed at the head of the list. He is undoubtedly the greatest force that has yet appeared in English fiction. The great power in his novel is the human nature—the real life. His men and women are natural. Sometimes they love, sometimes they hate, now they are wise and again they are foolish.

Bulwer-Lytton follows Scott. He gives us pictures of the upper middle class in England. His best works are Pelham, Paul Clifford, Eugene Aram, Rienzi, The Last of the Barons, Last Days of Pompeii.

Dickens. You all know him. Only to mention his name is to call up such works as "Pickwick Papers, Old Curiosity Shop, David Copperfield and Oliver Twist." Read also others such as Great Expectations and Edwin Drood.

Thackeray, the great realist closely follows: Read his "Vanity Fair, Henry Esmond," and the Newcomes. (Barry Lyndon.)

The sisters Emily and Charlotte Bronte come together. Read Wuthering Heights by Emily, and Jane Eyre and Shirley by Charlotte.

Then comes the great Psychological novelist, the greatest woman novelist of the centuries. We all admire her. Her world is a real world. Her people are real men and women, and children, with every day duties, with real temptations, real problems, real sorrows and joys. She is from first to last a philosopher and a novelist. She has worked out the Hebrew formula "that they who sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind." Her greatest work undoubtedly is Silas Marner. Then comes "Adam Bede," "The Mill on the Floss," "Middlemarch." Romola is not less noted. I was pleased to have an educated minister, a short time ago, praise the work very highly saying it was his favorite among the works of fiction. With Romola Geo. Elliott has left her living soul. A noted critic in comparing the two has this to say: "In Silas Marner, beautiful and complete in itself as it is, we have only the preface, to which Romola is the accomplished fact. While Silas Marner is perfect in its simplicity, Romola is great in its complexity.

Antony Trollope has given us about 100 novels. Read his "Barchester Towers." * These are some of the great fiction writers, known in literary spheres—and are to be found on the curriculum of our large universities in the graduate courses. Here you have a widely instructive and interesting field. Such writers are worth not only reading but studying. Here you get fiction of true literary worth and no chaff.

Other novelists of the last century, but of minor importance might be mentioned as Lockhart, Victor Hugo, Charles Lever, Kingsley, read Cooper and Hawthorne. This is all of fiction in the past you will say. What about our present novelists? We have some noble writers who are ever keeping the torch burning. I wish to mention a few.

Such names as Tolstoi, the Christian, Meredith the Philosopher, Hall Caine, Henry James, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, S. R. Crockett, Marion Crawford, Owen Wister, A. Conan Doyle, Thomas Hardy, Gilbert Parker, and many others are familiar to you. The works of these men are given a place in the libraries of the educated, and we as teachers ought to be acquainted with a few of them. For further information on the great novelists of today let me refer you to an article in the November issue of "The Success."

We must not forget to speak of our own three writers and their most noted works, which perhaps many of you have read, if you have re-read them again and again for the English literature.

Chas. G. D. Roberts—The Kindred of the Wild, The Heart of the Ancient Wood, The Forge in the Forest, and A Sister to Evangeline.

Gilbert Parker—The Right of Way, Seats of the Mighty, and The Battle of the Strong.
Ralph Connor—The Man from Glengarry, The Sky Pilot, Black Rock and Glengarry School Days.

I have not mentioned the biographer, the essayist, the critic or the historian. Recall such names as Ruskin, Macaulay, Lamb, Emerson and Carlyle. Many others might be added but this is sufficient.

I think the class of literature to which I have pointed you must clearly be placed not among the books only to be tasted, not even among those to be swallowed merely, but among those that are to be thoroughly chewed and digested as Bacon expresses it.

Fellow teachers, read, and become readers, read and become educated, read and become great. Many of you will not have the privilege of a college training, most of you may not go to a university, but you can all become educated in a true sense, by becoming acquainted with this great language of ours, this language which encircles the globe, that language which is destined to become ere long the universal language, that language which carries in its train, peace and harmony, freedom and justice, civilization and above all else christianity.

"Mark as it spreads how deserts bloom and error flies away,
As vanishes the mist of night before the start of day,
But grand as are the victories, whose monuments we see
These are but as the dawn which speaks of noon-tide yet to be."



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