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The English lyric as one author defines them are short poems. Dealing with one thought, essentially melodious in rhyme and structure, and if a metaphor may be taken from a sister art, a simple air, without progression, variation or accompaniment. We are accustomed to hear them spoken of as songs, at the present day—a term rightly applied, since these poems are written to be set to music. There is no form of literature that is so universally enjoyed by the people as the lyric. As far back as history traces—the English people one may find—the same love of song is characteristic of our race today. We know the early ancestors were in possession of a great many of them, although we have only a few in the ancient books—the Exeter and Vercelli—and also several old manuscripts.

The early literature, like the people, was very rude. In Beowulf we find this curious poem translated by Thork. It seems as strange and wild in spirit as the people of those days.
They that secret land
inhabit, the wolf retreats
windy nessis,
the dangerous fern path,
where the mountain stream,
under the nessis mists
downward flows,
the flood under the earth.
It is not far thence,
a mile's distance
that the mere stands,
over which hang
larky groves.
The earliest forms were written in
complete and composed of very short lines
without either rhythm or metre.
About 678 A.D. Ledeinmon - the founder of
English poetry - is supposed to have composed
most of his writings. In his works we see
a marked change, in that the warlike
spirit seems to be partly replaced by a re-
ligious spirit and the minds and surround-
ings of the people improved very much.
Until the time of Chaucer few lyrics were
written. The art of singing and composing gradu-
ally became the profession of wandering glee-keen or
minstrels.
The glemens were welcomed to the homes of all, even royalty, and considered men of such superior talents as to be above the people in general. This custom did not disappear until after Queen Elizabeth's time. The fourteenth century claims the greatest poet in English literature up to this time, Geoffrey Chaucer, well-known as the Morning Star of English Poetry. It has been said of him that if the histories had all been silent it would be a simple matter to judge of the customs and dress of the people of that age from his Canterbury Tales. His power of narration is truly great and he has never been equalled in animated, flowing, and picturesque narrative. In all his literary productions a great improvement in mental and physical conditions of man is evident. Metre and rhythm are employed and it is noticeable that the characters he describes are well-educated and interesting.

"A good man there was of religious, / And was a poor: Person of a town; / But riche he was of holy thought and werk. / He was also a learned man, a clerk. / That kriestes gospel trewely would speche; / The parichens devotenly would he teche. \"
Benigne he was and wonder diligent,
And in adversity full patient:
And such he was i-proved of time.
A decline then followed this luxuriant
growth and an inferior style of ballads
were introduced by the gleemen on subjects
pertaining to the lives and deeds of outlaws.
In Chivy shace we find

"At last the Douglas and the Percé met
Lyke to kaptayns of myght and of mayne;
The swapte together tylle the both swat,
With swords of that weare of fyne myyllan.
With that ther came an arrowe hastely,
Forth off a myghtte evane;
Hit hath the strekeene the yerle Douglas
Low at the brest bass.
The Percé leane on his brande;
And swave the Douglas de;
He toke the clese mane be the haunde;
And sayd," Wo ye me for the?"
Off all that we a Scottische knyght
Wass caullt Sir Hewe the Monggounbyrro;
He swave the Douglas to the cleth was lyght;
He expendyd a speer, a true tere.
He eat suipone the lord Percé
A dynte that was full soar;"
With a sawe speare of myghte to
seale thome the body he the Persber
A the tothar syde that a man myght se
A large clothe yard and more;
True better captyne wear not in Christiante,
Than that day slain wear ther.

Although the name of Christopher Marlowe
is unfamiliar to many as he was only one of
the inferow wrighte in the latter part of
the sixe thent century yet one lyre his
master piece still lives. Its description of the wild
scene of nature and its musical tones lend
a charm no other could give to it as when
he says

"come live with me and be my Love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hille and valleys, dale and field,
And all the craggie mountains yield:
There will we sit upon the rocks
And see the shepherds feed their flockes
By shallow river to whose falle
Melodious birds sing madrigals
There will I make the beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies
A cap of flowers and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle.
Following Marlowe, Edmund Spencer has won fame as the author of the most glorious love song in the English language—Epithalamion. He was the one to prepare the way for the greatest of all English poets—William Shakespeare. The genius of this, the greatest author, has never been questioned by learned men.

The charm that holds one when he reads Shakespeare's plays lies in the fact that he wrote to please others— not himself and the characters he portrays are true to life. One author says, "What he did, thought, learned, and felt, he did, thought, learned, and felt, as an artist, and it is this purely artistic nature appearing in all his works that gives them the value they possess. He wrote equally well on the passions, pains, joys and sorrows of mankind, and on nature. To those who want quiet and exclusive he says,

"Under the green wood tree
Who loves to lie with me
And tune his merry note
Unto the sweet birds' throat—
Come hither, come hither, come hither!
Here shall we see..."
No enemy

But winter and rough weather!
Who doth ambition shun
And loves to live in the sun,
Seeking the food he eats
And pleased with what he gets—
Home—hither, come—hither, come—hither
There shall we see

No enemy

But winter and rough weather?
In his sonnet on absence he expresses the blindness of love well when he says
"So true a fool is love, that in your will,
Though you do any thing he thinks no ill."

A simple little love song is
"Oh Mistress mine where are you roaming?
O stay and hear your true love's coming.
That can sing both high and low.
Trip no farther pretty Sweeting,
Journeys end in lovers meeting.
Every wise man's own doth know.
What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure.
In delay there lies no plenty.
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty
Don't this a staff will not endure"
We realize how short life is and how fast time is passing in
"Like as the waves make to the pebbled shore
So do our minutes hasten to their end;
Each changing place with that which goes before
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.

Nativity meets the main of light
Crawls to maturity, wherein th' being crowned,
Crooked eclipses gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave both now that gift confound.
Shakespeare has been called the moon among less
Stars in the firmament of Literature.
Dr. Samuel Johnson says, "The stream of time which is
Continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of
Other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of
Shakespeare."

Lord Macaulay pronounced him the greatest poet
That ever lived.
Thos. W. H. Churcey says, "In the gravest sense it may
Be affirmed of Shakespeare that he was among the
Modern luxuries of life; it was his prerogative
to have thought more finely and more extensively
Than all the other poets combined."

Lord Jeffrey says, "He is more full of wisdom
And ridicule and capacity than all the moralists
that ever existed, he is more wild, airy and inventive, and more pathetic and fantastic than all the poets of all regions and ages of the world."

According to the law of nature every thing has its highest standard of development after which it deteriorates and so it was with poetry. After Shakespeare it declined in the works of Robert Herrick. We are all familiar with his Council to Girls in which he says, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may, Old Time is still a flying; and this same flower that smiles today, tomorrow will be dying."

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun, The higher he's a getting The sooner will his race be run; and nearer he's to setting."

One author has said of him, "Without much depth of feeling or splendor of imagery, his poems are tender and melodious, and leave an inner impression of grace which is difficult to analyze." This we can feel in the little poem although it is hard to define it.

But poetry was not destined to perish it almost reached its once high standard.
in the works of our most sublime writer, John Milton. He possessed wonderful command of language which was strengthened continually by study. His great ambition was to excel in composition for the honor of his country, alone—not for any selfish motive. To aid him in his work he received a good education. He was blessed with a powerful mind and the means of using it. This great genius can be appreciated in the following when he speaks of Christ's sacrifice for us.

"That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty
Wherein he was wont at Heaven's high council table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside, and, here with us to be
Forsook the courts of Everlasting day,
And chose with me a darksome house
of mortal clay."

And again when he describes the star gazing at the babe in the manger.

"The stars with deep amaze,
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze..."
Bending one way their precious influence
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light
Or Lucifer that oft warned them thence;
But in this glimmering orb it did glow,
Until their Lord himself bespake and bid things.
Milton was followed by writers on
sarcasm and severe critics among the most
important being Pope’s Dryden; Pope was not con-
sidered a lyricist but Dryden’s Song for St.
Beatrix’s Day is especially prized as a gem
in our Literature. Upon this poem rests his
fame as a lyricist. Especially impressive is
the chorus

"As from the power of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sang the great Creator’s praise
To all the bliss above;
So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devours.
The trumpet shall be heard on high
The dead shall live, the living die,
And music shall enliven the sky."

In the eighteenth, that subject changed
to nature. During this period which was
in the earlier part of this century, the
The finest lyric in our language was written by Thomas Gray—his Elegy written in a Country Church Yard. As one reads it he can feel the terrible anguish of those whose hopes are crushed by deaths of clear ones and feel the darkness which seems to fall on him as he reads of the forgotten ones, those lying whose dumb lips seem to plead for him to shed one tear of pity on their tomb. No other poem in our literature better expresses utter hopelessness. So read is

"The boast of heraldry, the gory of power,
All that beauty, all that wealth o’ergave,
Await alike the inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

In line 69 finds expression in

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear.
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

One feels in suspense all through the poem relieved only partially in the last verse by

"There they alike in death their love shall rest
The bosom of his Father and his God."

The Scottish literature became popular in the works of Robert Burns—known as
Scotland's Sweet Singer. His charm lies in simplicity of language and subject. He is called by John Service "The poet of homely human nature, not half so homely as it seems," and, his claim to be considered the first of song writers is hardly disputed. He is also the poet of passion and feeling possessing a rich rare humor unlike any other. To the daisy he sympathetically yet simply says "He, modest, crimson tipped flower, Thou hast met me in an evil hour; For Imman cruel among the stones Thy slender stem; To repore thee now is past my power, Thou bonny gem."

In the well known poem For A That am A That he takes a brave stand for labor and the laborer, condemning the proud aristocrat in "In there for honest poverty That hang his head and 'a that! The coward slave we pass him by; We dare be poor for a' that! For a' that, and a' that,
Our toil obscure, and all that
There rank is but the guinea's stamp.
The man's the good for all that.
This simple honest singer has won
a place no other can fill. All nation-
alties recognize in Burns a genius
of no mean quality whose name will
last as long as our literature exists.
Well may Scotland be proud of
Burns and yet she as dearly love her great
war poet, Sir Walter Scott who is equalled by
no one in composing war lyrics. His power
can be felt if not described in the patriotic
poem
"Breathe there a man with soul is dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
"This is my own, my native land?"
Whose heart has ne'er within him burned
As homeward his footsteps he hath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand.
If such there breathe, go, mark him well;
For him no ministrel raptures swell!
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wiser can claim.
Despite those titles, power, and self,
The wretch concentrated all in self,
Living shall forfeit fair renown,
And doubly dying shall go down
To the vile dust from which hereping
Unwept, unhonored and unseen.

During the latter part of the eighteenth
and the earlier part of the present
century the subject of Nature was
most highly developed in England's
Nature poet William Wordsworth
who believed that Nature possessed a
soul. One can read his character and
life from his writings — a life so full of
pure devotion and love that all seem
ed to think him almost a perfect
man. To the skylark he says
"Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky,
Dost thou despise the earth where crows
abound?
Or while the wings aspire, are heart
and eye
Both with thy nest upon the ground;
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at
will
Those quivering wings composed that music still!

"Type of the wise, who soar but never roam
True to the kindred points of Heaven."
He is the author of three poems on birds, the equal of which no language can produce. To the Cuckoo, being recognized as the best. No praise that I could give him would convey any idea of his wonderful ability and power. The greatest thing that can be said of him is that he was a true poet.

Following Wordsworth and almost in his footsteps was the late Alfred Tennyson—a poet of very great power. One can imagine they hear the echo of the bugle in

"All hark I hear! How thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
A sweet and far from cliff and sea,
The home of Elfland faintly blowing.
In the following poem, the author expresses all that is dreamy, cold, and sad.

"Break, break, break,
O'er thy cold gray stones Ah Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter

The thoughts that arise in me" also

"And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice — that is still,
Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, 0, sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me."

It can safely and truly be said — that
the lyrics are more universally developed
of a higher standard — than ever be-
fore in either England or young Amer-
ica who now claims a place.

William Bullein Bryant, the American
Wordsworth was our first great poet. Altho
equal to Wordsworth — they differ greatly
in that Bryant is cold, dignified or
of a more lofty moral tone, sublime,
and painfully correct — sometimes while
Wordsworth is warm and gushing
simple, unassuming, and of ten quite
childlike in his gentle sweetness.

Both men were finely educated.
Undoubtedly Bryant surpasses all
others in writing of death in
"The melancholy days are come, the saddest
day of the year,
Of wailing winds and naked woods
and meadows brown and bare.
Heaped in the hollows of the grove the
withered leaves lie dead;
They rustle in the eddying gusts and to
the rabbit's tread.
The robins and the wrens are flown
and from the shrub the jay,
And from the wood top calls the crow
through all the gloomy clay.

Although England reconsidered Bryant
a poet of wonderful ability, she seemed
inclined to think Longfellow the
most conspicuous person belonging to
our own small class of American
poets. We feel his great mental
powers in

"Thou too sail on, O ship of State!
Sail on! O Union strong and great!
Humanity with all its fears,
With all the hopes of future years,
In hanging breathless on thy fate."

Unlike Bryant he was of a more
hopeful turn of mind and proceeded
a more cheerful disposition not
proven to discouragement no evidence.

"Tell me not in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
And the soul is dead — that slumbers
And things are not what they seem.
Life is real, life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
'Dust thou art, to dust returnest'
Was not spoken of the soul."

John G. Whittier is famous as the great American war poet. To him the credit has been given as one of the principal moving agents during the late war against slavery. But death has claimed all the great stars in our literature. To the future we look with expectant eyes for even greater authors who will direct the hearts and minds of our people a right. It is well said that the songs of a country do the most in keeping the morals pure and may the future generation enjoy even sweeter songs than those the great men of the past have left. In the words of Barry Cornwall "Songs from bales, thoughts should win us; songs should charm us out of woe;
Song should stir the heart within us
Like a patriot's friendly blow.
Song should spur the mind to duty
Nurture the weak and stir the strong.
Every deed of truth and beauty
Should be crowned by a starry song.