

by *simplicity* in poetry. A poem is properly said to be *simple* when the emotions it stirs, or the feelings of pleasure and pain it calls forth, are such as are common to all men alike, and which therefore all may share in. But there is another point to observe about *simplicity* in poetry, and that is the manner in which it shows itself. If we examine the best poems in any literature most conspicuous for this quality, we shall find that, when they are describing a scene or an emotion, they will do this in the most direct way possible; each word will be carefully selected that there may be no doubt as to what meaning is intended to be conveyed, and the necessary number of words for conveying the required impression will be used, and no more; there will be no superfluities, no indulging in flights of fancy which may tend to obscure the meaning, no playing with fine words for the mere sound alone; in short, the language of the poem will be adequate to the occasion.

Mr. Palgrave speaks of the severe *simplicity* of its form. How is this shown? In this way: its language and versification are adequate to the occasion. The "Royal George," at that time the finest ship in the navy, was accidentally overturned whilst undergoing repairs off the coast. A British admiral and nearly one thousand seamen were drowned. The event was justly regarded as a national calamity, and a whole nation mourned its loss. There is an awful silence in all heartfelt grief—words seem totally inadequate to express the sorrow that is surging below; or, if the burden of silence grows intolerable, it will find expression in the briefest ejaculations. The sympathy, too, which such a grief demands will be undemonstrative; many words, even though kindly uttered, will serve only to widen and aggravate the wound. If this is the case with individual sorrow, how

much more when a whole nation is thrown into mourning, when not one, but many hearts are wrung with a sense of unutterable loss, the difficulty is increased of finding words that shall adequately express not only one's individual sense of desolation, but the inarticulate motions of despair that are agitating thousands of hearts! The very occasion was an unwritten poem—the employment of verse could hardly have added to its poetical character and significance, which all could feel. How, then, has the poet treated his subject? He has presented us in the most direct way by a series of simple and touching pictures the scene of the catastrophe as it presented itself to his imagination: there are no violent expressions of grief and despair; all is calm and restrained, and yet the thrilling pathos of the situation is fully brought out. The monotone of grief is admirably rendered in the short lines, at the close of every one of which the voice is almost compelled to pause with slowly dying cadence, like the muffled peal of funeral bells. It is a characteristic of sorrow that, though it may be for a time diverted from its object, it continually passes back again to the thought of its particular loss. Read Stanzas i., iv., and ix., and you will see how grief reiterates itself:

- (i.) "Toll for the brave!
The brave that are no more . . ."
- (iv.) "Toll for the brave!
Brave Kempenfeldt is gone . . ."
- (ix.) "But Kempenfeldt is gone,
His victories are o'er . . ."

Again, Mr. Palgrave speaks of the *tenderness* of the poem. How is this shown? Chiefly, is it not, by the way in which the poet brings vividly before us the pathos of the situation, and the little human touches by which he contrasts and intensifies it? What an importance the most trifling acts and sayings assume in the retrospective memory when the author of them is dead! Thus the poet does not