

depends on the *mood* of the speaker or writer, and whether he aims to communicate a practical idea or fact, or to awake a sentiment, excite an emotion, free the fancy or fire the imagination, how far forth prose shall be mere prose or the rhythmical prose which is essentially poetry. It is a fact, however, that, in obedience to the instinctive tendency of speech to be rhythmical, readers will impose rhythm on mere prose. So that the ideal of prose is not to get away from poetry but to approach it in rhythm or melodic flow.

It makes no difference, then, whether we take the "running" prose form of "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who bringeth good tidings, who publisheth peace, who saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth", or impose on these words the manner of "free verse", thus—

How beautiful
Upon the mountains
Are the feet
Of him who bringeth good tidings,
Who publisheth peace,
Who saith unto Zion,
Thy God reigneth—

the truth is that the impulse, the mood, the aim of the speaker or writer of them was poetical and the words are poetry; and it makes no difference whether they are regarded as rhythmical prose or "free verse", the truth is that they are in mood, in imagery, in rhythm and melody indubitably poetry. Moreover, I must point out that they are *Hebrew* poetry as such and not really rhythmical prose or even "free verse". For they were not composed in the prose mood, but in the poetic mood, and "free verse" is much more than rhythmical prose in irregular lines. The unit of "free verse" is not the line, but something akin to the strophe of the Greek choral odes; and its rhythm and melody are not artificial but natural—the inevitable rhythm and melody inherent in human speech, and "set free" by the composer of the verses. Still, as I said and hold, for the English reader "free verse" will

convey most approximately the beauty and charm of Hebrew poetry as we get it in the quotations from Christ's words as translated into our own tongue.

To see Christ *explicitly* creative as a Poet it is only necessary to observe His poet's eye for *colour* in nature, His love for and singular appreciation of the spiritual meaning of little *children* and of the heart of *woman*, His abundant use of picturesque *similes* and original *metaphors*, His immortal *parables*, His power of pathetic, almost tragic, *apostrophe*, the peculiarly oracular quality and form of His *maxims* of essential Christianity, and how almost constantly, or at least when not merely conversing or merely explaining, He casts His discourses and sayings, even with regard to the lowliest of things, into the *formal structure* of traditional Hebrew poetry. In short, we can readily observe Christ, as it were, at work exercising the sense and faculty of the Poet, employing the material of poetry, and applying the technical craftsmanship of the authentic poet who possesses the artistic conscience. It is easy briefly to illustrate all this.

In the perception of nature Christ's mind is richly pictorial; He has the poet's eye for colour; He knows the field flowers of His native land and loves their glorious beauty. Christ is a nature-colourist, a word-painter. A remarkable instance of this quality of His poetic genius is found in the familiar verses from Matthew, VI., 28-29:

Consider the lilies of the field, how
they grow;
They toil not, neither do they spin;
And yet I say unto you,
That not even Solomon in all his
glory
Was arrayed like one of these.

On the hills of Nazareth, where Christ spent His boyhood, grows a species of lily which travellers who botanized in the Holy Land tell us possesses a dark violet colour akin to royal purple, incomparably beautiful; also native to the same district is the