

## WORK FOR THE MIND.

By William J. Gallagher.

In every work of art, in every poem, in every picture there is more to be inferred than what is actually read at the first skimming glance—if the said skimming is admissible at all. Hence it is that so much untrue criticism exists in the world of letters, and otherwise.

Throughout the poems the many lovely conceptions which cluster, like berries on a spray, are hidden in a web of common texture. The most beautiful thought of all is, that, this the last to be received into the mind. Let us take for instance

## Tennyson's "Brook."

Everyone will know, at a glance, that the voice and motion of water flows with freedom and truth on the poet's page. But there "is a depth below the depth," even here. Take this magnificent line:

I make the netted sunbeams dance  
Against my sandy shallows.

Here we have the shadow produced by tremulous water edged with reeds, and thrown into shade and shine by the mighty painter, sun! But there is more. Wind ripples the water and recurs through which the sun darts. This is the secret of the setting. Again, it is only in water of small depth that the reed's reflection could reach the sand. Hence, "sandy shallows." Thus we find not only a full picture, but a correct picture. And it is more even than correct. It is a speaking picture to those who have mused much by the side of pools. Further in the same poem we read:

I chatter, chatter, as I flow  
To join the brimming river.  
Now, this word chatter is fuller than speak, or murmur, or anything which the poet could have used. Chattering is disjointed, yet repeatedly uttered speech. The stream chatters, and breaks its murmur as it chances to be delayed by temporary obstruction, masses of silt, boulders, bits of warped grass, etc. But it finally "joins the river" and in this there is a grand and enduring lesson for us. We may be delayed, but we are to "toil upward" through the "night" of sorrow, disappointment and society-friction. Love's eternal sea is on before!

In that magnificent fragment of Coleridge's entitled, "The Lime-tree Bower my Prison," the poet makes a decided natural hit. With masterstroke he carves, in two or three lines, sky and rippling wind, leaf and gazer. Here is the stroke:

The shadow of the leaf and tree above,  
Dappling its sunshine.

This "dappled sunshine" of the bough and leaf while the gazer sees a speck of sky above, transversely broken, to his vision, is one of those things realisable by a Ruskin, but by few others! But Coleridge is notable for stanzas which combine whole pages of nature in single lines. They drop, like jewels, from every stanza of "The Ancient Mariner," and here and there in "Christabel," but notably in the first-named.

## Picturesquely True is Also Whittier.

In "The Brother of Mercy"—a part of his connective poem. "The Tent on the Beach," we have this grim, yet truthful picture:

To tread the crowded lazaretto's floors,  
Down the long twilight of the corridors,  
Mid tossing arms, and faces full of pain.

Oh, that sea of saddened faces and "tossing arms" which can seldom rest in one position, how I seem to see and read it all. It is as if one threaded a forest of pitiful-looking images, with the twilight of fading eve touching in to deeper sorrow the growing picture. Further in the same poem, we read of the deep harp of the sea's sand. Nobody but a master could have so spoken. The note which the tide utters is loudest as it breaks on the shallows of

grit. Here is how Whittier puts it:  
She, with lips to which belong  
Sweet intuitions of all art,  
Gave to the winds of night a strain  
Which they who heard would hear  
again;

And to her voice the solemn ocean  
lent,  
Touching its harp of sand, a deep accompaniment.

Those concluding lines will forever haunt the lover of the sea as he hears the voice of the retreating or advancing tide, in moments of pensive musing. And mark in what lordly words he allows us to know that memory's treasures are abiding! "which they who hear will hear again." Reading between the lines is here a lovely and a profitable task. Again, hark how Whittier voices the homage of waves to their source:

Its waves are kneeling on the strand  
As kneels the human knee,  
Their white locks bowing to the sand—  
The priesthood of the sea!

Comment on the beauty of these would be an unkind mockery! If we were to give the very purest touches of reliable scenery we might hold safely by Whittier to the finish.

In the awful perspective of poet scenery we can find no lovelier and far reaching view than is embodied in Beattie's "Judgment of Paris." After a vision had ended we are told:  
The sun was sunk: the vision was no more;

Night downward rushed, tempestuous,  
at the frown  
Of Jove's awakened wrath; deep thunders roar,  
And forests howl afar, and mountains groan.

In the strength of the metaphors here applied, we can find no equal anywhere. If we could dare to find a somewhat similar strength it would be in Byron's night-scene in "Childe Harold," where  
Jura answers from her darkening shroud,  
Back to the joyous Alps that call to her aloud!

We pass on to Wordsworth—that poet which James Russell Lowell would make out, in his essays, to be scarcely a poet at all—and we find the following weighty lines, showing the influence of an ordinary mind of the commonwealth on his time and race. Here are words which will bear to be well read!  
When looking on the present face of things

I see one man, of men the meanest,  
too,  
Raised up to sway the world, to do,  
undo,  
With mighty nations for his underlings!

Then he speaks of the doubts of everlasting righteousness which, in consequence, arise in his mind! There are such periods in our lives—moments when we helplessly drift on the sea of Fate, nor see the maiden with the glistening Anchor—Hope!

## James Russell Lowell.

has some of the most abiding images of Nature which it would be possible to find in literature. If his thought is not all times vast, he thinks with that picturesqueness, at least, which true poetry can never dispense with safely, and thus we find the image of the bird, the scene, and the man, "in the Cathedral":

A larger shadow crossed; and, looking up,  
I saw where, nestling in the hoary towers,

The sparrow-hawk slid forth on noiseless air,  
With sidelong head that watched the joy below,  
Grim Norman baron o'er this clan of Kells.

Enduring nature, force conservative, Indifferent to our noisy whims.  
Who ever called a bird—or who could conceive such an image—"a Norman

baron"? Truly conservative, with an eye to the retention of all old usages was this hawk of the poet's mind-landscape. Many other striking images—in which there is much "between-line" reading to be done, occur in Lowell. In "Under the Willows," a patriotic poem, we have the following lines:

I love to enter pleasure by a postern,  
Not the broad popular gate that gulps  
the mob;

To find my theatres in roadside nooks,  
Where men are actors, and suspect it not;

Where Nature all unconscious works  
her will.

Let any one of our budding authors, who think that their mind-images, and stretch of phrase are equal to those of the masters, read these four lines, and we believe they will retrench, reform, or grow ashamed of their first belief, i.e., if they grasp the significance of the picture which hints at more than it performs, and yet performs all which the picturesque eye would require! The same poet it was who gave us the following, in "A Legend of Brittany":  
Dim vistas, sprinkled o'er with sun-flecked green,  
Wound, thro' the thickest trunks, on every side.

But we could go on and on with these pictures. They are mind-stretchers, and mind-quickeners, and we may say, they abide somewhere, in all the poets. Such is the true meaning of poetry. It is a prophet message—it may be denunciation, or it may be joy-clothed in a Sunday garment, or bridal dress. And such being the case is it any matter for wonder that Wordsworth calls down a laudation on those who have so opened up the palace of Beauty for us? Will we not join in those words, which are a delightful mind image, themselves:

Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,  
Who gave us nobler loves, and nobler cares  
The poets—who on earth have made us heirs  
Of truth, and pure delight, by heavenly lays!  
Oh, might my name be numbered  
among theirs,  
Then gladly would I end my mortal days!

## BROWNING'S LINEAGE.

How blind the toil that burrows like the mole,  
In winding graveyard pathways underground,  
For Browning's lineage! What if men have found  
Poor footmen or rich merchants on the roll  
Of her forebears! Did they beget his soul?  
Nay, for he came of ancestry renowned  
In poesy through all the world, and crowned  
With fadeless light that shines from pole to pole.

The blazons on his poet's shield are these:  
The flaming sign of Shelley's heart on fire,  
The golden globe of Shakespeare's human stage,  
The staff and scrip of Chaucer's pilgrim image,  
The rose of Dante's deep, divine desire,  
The magic mask of wise Euripides,  
—Henry van Dyke, in the February Atlantic.

He who rushes into the presence of God and hurriedly whispers a few petitions and rushes out again, never, perhaps, sees God there at all. He can no more get a vision than a disquieted lake can mirror the stars. We must stay long enough to become calm, for it is only the peaceful soul in which eternal things are reflected as in a placid water.—Arthur T. Pierson.