

English.

All articles and communications intended for this department should be addressed to the ENGLISH EDITOR, EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL, Room 20, 11½ Richmond Street, Toronto.

THE GOLDEN TOUCH, AN ETHICAL AND CRITICAL STUDY,

[FOR SENIOR THIRD CLASS.]

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1. SPECIAL object: To obtain author's meaning and moral teaching.

2. General objects: To cultivate observation, imagination, language and taste.

To understand an author it is well to know something about his life. The following are a few general facts in the life of Hawthorne:

Nathaniel Hawthorne, one of the finest American novel writers, was born at the beginning of the present century, probably in 1806. He lived in Salem, Massachusetts, and his mind became deeply tinged with the weird quaintness of the New England traditions and superstitions, his humor modifying his beliefs, and causing him to relate them as though he were an on-looker at a distance. His writings deal largely with his surroundings, and with the ancient tales of the olden days of New England, which he relates in elegant and easy language, giving at the same time a wholesome and moral inflection to his story. He was at one time Surveyor-General of Customs at Salem (vide "Scarlet Letter") and American Consul at Liverpool. He died in 1864. "Twice-told Tales," "Mosses From an Old Manse," "Scarlet Letter," and the "House of the Seven Gables," are his best books. He is psychological and weird and somewhat mystical, and he himself feared that on this account he would be forgotten, unless some boy remembered him as the author of the "Town Pump!" Our Ontario boys will remember him better as the author of "The Golden Touch" and "The Truant" (in the Fourth Reader.)

"The Golden Touch" is a story intended to teach a useful lesson. It is a fable or allegory. It is especially to obtain the meaning Mr. Hawthorne wishes to convey that we study this lesson, and it will be necessary to explain the meaning of an allegory. It will perhaps disappoint the children to be told it is not literally true, and some may refuse to give up their belief, as one boy did in regard to the "Fairies on Caldon Low." He said he had relations who had seen them in England, and his vexation was great when he was told there were no fairies. We have to leave such children in the enjoyment of their harmless fancies, knowing that time will harden their hearts and remove most of the beautiful delusions of youth and innocence soon enough to suit even the worst Gradgrind in the School district.

The class may read silently the introduction of the personages and their description, as far as the middle of page 217. Return to first and question. (Who? When? Who else? Describe Midas.) Appropriate name for child may be noticed, and here a question will be asked by the children: "How is it 'Marygold' was never heard of by anyone else than Mr. Hawthorne?" Explain, if you can, and as you may, but there will still remain a puzzle to most. The terrible truth that Hawthorne invented Marygold as an influence to check Midas in his downward career, could not be received by any but a hardened youth!

Questions: What was chief point in the character of Midas? Why did he value his royal crown? Why should he have valued it? What is the value of the royal crown to our good Queen? How much did Midas love Marygold? What effect had his love upon his character and actions? How did he think he could best show his love to her? Have you ever heard of parents feeling so? Is it right? (Get reasons for answer, and show correctness of the feeling in modified degree.) What could a parent do better for a child than to save up a great heap

of wealth to leave him? (Educate him to help himself, give him good chances of culture, give him good society, give him power to help to do good, let him have comforts and enjoyments as he went along, that he may be able to enjoy rationally what there might be to leave at the parents' death. Child less likely to wish parent dead.) Attention should be called to the beauties of nature which are described here in a way that shows Hawthorne to be a lover of natural loveliness. Ask pupils to describe, *as well as they can*, some beautiful things they have seen. What did Midas think of the sunsets and the yellow flowers? What loss would there be if flowers were turned to metal? (Get answers, then indicate a few of the scientific points, as: Flowers feeding bees and insects, which in turn benefit the flowers by carrying pollen to fertilize the seeds, which are of economic value in feeding man, animals, and birds, being eaten in the form of grain and fruits. The plants also exercising a beneficial effect on the atmosphere by absorbing carbonic acid gas and giving out oxygen.) Which was wiser, Marygold or her father? Why? (Answer on paper.) What lesson does Hawthorne draw from the fact of Midas becoming more miserly? (Like the little girl in "Alice and the Looking-glass," who ran as hard as she could, yet never got past the same spot, and, when she expressed surprise, was told that she would find that it took people all their time to *keep up* without getting ahead at all, Hawthorne says, "people always grow more and more foolish unless they take care to grow wiser and wiser.") What kind of friends would Midas like to have? Pick out four words, all beginning with the same dull letter, that form a pen-picture of Midas' treasure room. (Teacher explain words requiring explanation as she finds pupils needing help.)

To present next paragraph in its true light get the class to imagine that Midas is sitting playing with what he thinks is gold, but which is really sand and shining brass. Where would the enjoyment be then? Many persons in lunatic asylums are enjoying such happiness as Midas enjoyed in his treasure room. "But the gold was gold, and was worth something. Midas could have spent it and got a great deal of good things for it." This may come spontaneously. Suggest it if it do not. Get class to think it out. Speak of bank notes and their value as pieces of paper, and after the bank breaks; tell of Indians using shells, etc., to bring out idea of purchasing power of money deciding its value.

Midas is now in a proper state to receive the spirit or genius who is introduced. Language in this part is elegant. Mysticism may be lightly touched upon, but not dwelt upon, as children are naturally superstitious and may form distorted ideas of what is said, to their hurt. What had the stranger come to do, evil or good? Read the conversation, and try to imagine the feelings of Midas as he thought of what he should ask for. How did the stranger look when Midas asked for the Golden Touch? This is a beautiful paragraph; the image of the dell, the golden sunlight, the yellow leaves likened to the treasure-room and its contents, give a vivid idea of the scene. Notice the distribution of consonants. The paragraph fairly sparkles and gleams because of their masterly selection and distribution. In the conversation the stranger asks a question, Midas answers with a question and again answers with another, and the stranger seems satisfied to accede to the request, and disappears in a blaze of brightness, leaving Midas dazed and blinded. It may be well to ask a few review questions, but it is not necessary to spend much time until the general review, as it will interrupt the perspective of the story to break it up.

The Second Reading of the Golden Touch deals with Midas in possession of the longed-for boon, enjoying it madly and unthinkingly, until Marygold's sobs cause him a slight sensation of uneasiness, which becomes alarm when his food turns to gold. The second part ends, however, leaving Midas still anxious to keep his

power, though he is seriously startled. The influence of Marygold begins to be felt, and Hawthorne introduces a touching and homely bit of feeling when he makes Midas sorry to have the little handkerchief changed.

Word and phrase definition as required. Midas changes one thing after another into gold, most of the changes signifying a loss; the handkerchief, the spectacles, the book, the flowers, the food, the pictures on the bowl, friends (as exemplified by Marygold) these all will give subjects for thoughtful debate. Ask for list of things that are better than gold. (Read "Better than Gold" in old Third Reader during this period of study.) A composition entitled "Better than Gold," on the following lines would fit in here:

1. Things better than gold when a person is sick.
2. _____ if cast on a desert island.
3. _____ if in trouble of mind.
4. _____ if weary.
5. _____ when lonely.

And when children are tired of play and want something to interest them, what they would like to have—books.

Do parents now-a-days ever exchange their children for gold? (By neglecting them or working them too hard.) How much money is a boy or girl worth? What changed Midas?

The third part brings in the genius for the second time. Midas has changed very much, yet he is still dissatisfied and longing for a boon. But it is a different boon he now craves, it is *love*, and he is willing to give his all, more now than before, for a person who loves him unfeignedly. The first visit found Midas a "miser," he is now "miserable." Read both conversations to find contrasts. Name commonest things more useful than gold. If gold were common it would be cheap, too. There is hope for anyone who values a child's love. Midas had not had his heart all changed to gold, as the result showed. He made no reserve of a particle of his magic power, nor asked to have it a moment longer, but gladly plunged into the river. How did he prove his honesty? What did Marygold say when she came back to life? Tell the rest of the story. Is this a true or false story? Give reason for answer. Review questions:

Read the prettiest paragraph, the best description, a beautiful thought, the saddest part, a lively paragraph, a paragraph that warns us, a climax. Which contains the grandest words? Which word expresses a great deal? How long did it take Midas' to change as he did? What word tells the reason of his alteration? Give subjects of each part. What is the moral of it all?

COMPOSITION AND THOUGHT.

[We reproduce this article by Miss Lascomb from the *School Journal*, because it contains an eminently practical and suggestive method of interesting pupils in the verbal expression of their own observations. There is every reason in advanced classes that pupils who are interested chiefly in physics, chemistry, etc., should learn to express accurately, briefly, and in good English, their observations of phenomena. These, and the topography of the district they live in, with the school or farm or roads or woods they best know, will afford plain, sensible subjects for clear, sensible writing, and, if accompanied by drawings, opportunities for the cultivation of accuracy of hand as well as of mind.—ENGLISH ED.]

I gave the subject of the lesson, The Table, to my fifth-year pupils. Our children are bright enough naturally, but we are just emerging in our school neighborhood from the narrow methods of the past, and they have not had much previous training in observation. The diversity in the results of their first effort upon "A Table," showed distinctly how some had fallen naturally into habits of observation, while others needed school training in this matter. A few of the compositions gave the essentials of