

## English.

All articles and communications intended for this department should be addressed to the ENGLISH EDITOR, EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL, Room 5, 11½ Richmond Street West, Toronto.

## "THE BURIAL OF SIR JOHN MOORE." \*

BY M. A. WATT.

This poem gives exercise for sentiment and for mind pictures.

As an introduction, an outline sketch of the British Isles and the coast of the mainland as far as Spain is desirable, marking Corunna and the mountains which gave Sir John Moore so much hard marching in the depths of winter. The teacher had better read up the history of the Peninsular War, and be prepared to give a sketchy outline in a rapid, attractive manner. It is better not to mention what lesson is to be taken up, letting the class sit listening without books. I had the pleasure, some time since, of hearing this lesson introduced to a class, by one of our brightest teachers. Her class were deeply interested in the historical sketch, and when the books were opened they read the poem with avidity, and seemed to see the pictured thought with great clearness. The history runs somewhat as follows:

"About ninety years ago, the people of Europe had to fight a powerful enemy. (Who was he?) Yes, Napoleon Bonaparte was his name, and it seemed as though he were going to conquer the whole of Europe, anyway. Now, in Spain there was serious trouble, for he had seized the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal. Then the Spanish called on Great Britain to help them drive out the French army. This the British agreed to do, and sent Sir Arthur Wellesley (afterwards the Duke of Wellington), under the command of a superior officer, to help the Spaniards. The British won a great battle, but the superior officer failed to push on and take advantage of this success, letting the French march out. The British, very angry, indeed, at this, recalled him and sent out Sir John Moore, who marched into Spain late in October. He had scarcely got there when he found the Spaniards defeated by the French, who gathered around the English, forcing them to retire to the coast. Here, at Corunna, Sir John Moore faced the enemy and defeated them; thus his army were able to embark for England unmolested by the enemy. But, alas, the brave leader lay in an unknown grave, hastily and secretly dug in the darkness of night, lest the enemy should injure his body. He had lived long enough, however, to know that the enemy was defeated (January 16th, 1809)." Now the class take books and find the poem which tells of his lonely burial. What is the author's name? Did you ever hear of him before? Some will say, "Wolfe took Quebec." Comparison of dates will show this mistake, and the names "James" and "Charles" will further settle the matter.

Read silently. Read again, looking to see the scene with your mind's eyes. Close your eyes and look at the scene. Get ready to tell what you see. James tells the class:

"I see a soldier's funeral."

A dissenting hand is raised. Mary gives her grounds for differing:

"At a soldier's funeral there is a band, and guns are fired, but here 'not a drum was heard,' and 'not a soldier discharged his farewell shot.' I see a group of a few men, who steal quietly along, close to the walls, where they dig a grave and put some one in it."

Truly, a strange soldier's funeral! The class look solemn; the pageantry of a soldier's funeral has often been seen, but its solemn grandeur has covered over for them the thought of death; they have, perhaps, thought soldiers are always buried with pomp, "arms reversed and muffled drum" following "the funeral car," "the banners taken" and "the masterless steed."

Martin gives his idea of the scene:

"The first scene is the few men carrying a body, without a coffin. The scene moves on and changes; the body is laid down; the soldiers with their bayonets scrape the earth away until they have a place

deep enough to hide the body. The moon peeps out from the clouds, and the soldiers carefully shade their dim lantern, lest the enemy catch sight of it, and come over to see what they are doing. Now, they stoop over, and gently lift the body of their dead leader and place it in the shallow grave, wrapped in his soldier's cloak. Then they stand and look, and look at his face, before they cover it over with his cloak, and gently lay the earth upon him."

QUESTION.—Do you judge that the soldiers were not sorry by the words "we spoke not a word of sorrow"?

Reasons were given, quotations were mentioned, and the children's experience of sorrow proved to be broader than their years would lead one to suspect.

TEACHER.—Explain what is meant by "The foe and the stranger would tread o'er his head And we far away on the billow."

Also by

"Little he'll reck, if they let him sleep on In the grave where a Briton has laid him."

TEACHER.—Think of another picture. Put yourselves in the enemy's place and think of them as the burial is going on.

JESSIE.—I think I see the sentry walking along. He fancies he sees a light, but seeing it no more he passes on and forgets it. The commander is in his tent, sitting gloomily, and the soldiers are all resting, except some at the far end of the camp, who are firing a gun now and then to frighten stragglers or spies.

TEACHER.—Change now to another scene. The burial is over, and the soldiers turn to go home.

TOMMY.—The few soldiers are turning away, but one goes back. He almost fancied he saw the cloak of Sir John Moore showing through the earth. But they hold the lantern low and all over the ground, and find no trace of it. So they go back, talking softly after a while together, and they are sorry to think there is no monument to mark the spot.

TEACHER.—The scene next day.

ROLLIE.—The vessel is loaded with soldiers. All is bustle and hurry. The enemy are gone back a little, and are watching them embarking. Sick and wounded are carried in, and now the vessel is off. On the deck are a group of six soldiers, who stand looking back. They seem to be saying "There's the spot, over near the rampart. Can you see it? Poor fellow, he has a lonely grave. He deserved a good monument."

TEACHER.—But I have seen his monument. I have never been to Europe, yet I have seen a monument which has been erected to his memory. And, so, I am sure, have you each seen it."

Surprise! Thoughtful looks! Dawning intelligence! One hand after another is raised. They have discovered the "monument." It is the poem before them. A discussion follows on the relative worth and durability of a "monument of words" and a "monument of stone." Words and phrases to be explained, and their suitability discussed, followed the thought study, and the versification also was considered. Memorizing as a class recitation followed, when all were thoroughly possessed of the meanings of the verses.

A composition was given on the story of the "Battle of Corunna," under two headings, "Napoleon" and "Sir John Moore."

## ENTRANCE LITERATURE.\*

## LVI.—THE HONEST MAN, GEO. HERBERT.

\* BY A. M. MACMEHAN, PH.D.

I.—BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

This is an extremely difficult and rugged piece of verse. The style is much condensed, the transitions in thought are abrupt, and in some cases violent; every line is packed with meaning. Young pupils cannot be expected to profit by it, without very patient and thorough explanation. In order to teach it as it should be taught, the teacher should know something of his other poetry, his life, character, and the literature of which Herbert forms a part. "The Poems of George Herbert," Camelot Classics Series (Walter Scott, London and Newcastle, 1886), costs about twenty-five cents; and contains not only a good selection of his poetry

but the invaluable life of the author by Izaak Walton. It will be found to be most helpful to the conscientious teacher or student.

George Herbert (1593-1633) belonged to one of the most famous families in England. His eldest brother was Lord Herbert of Cherbury, soldier, statesman, and religious philosopher; his mother, like Goethe's, was one of those notable women to whom their talented sons owe so much. Herbert was educated at Westminster school and at Cambridge, that home of English poets. In his youth he was a courtier; and received from James II. an appointment worth £120 a year. Disappointed of further preferment, and urged by his mother, he entered the church; in 1626 he was made Prebendary of Layton Ecclesia, and in 1630 he became parish priest of Bemerton, near Salisbury. Before his induction, he married Miss Jane Danvers, on a very short acquaintance. His health had long been weak, and he was carried off while yet a young man, by consumption.

Herbert was a devout Christian and a zealous adherent of the Church of England. His poetry is devoted to the expression of distinctively Christian thought and to the praise of the church he loved so well. At Bemerton, he and his household spent much of their time in the devout practice of religious observances. He was passionately fond of music, and he was kind to the poor of his parish. Of his personal appearance, Walton says: "He was for his person of a stature inclining towards tallness; his body was very straight, and so far from being cumbered with too much flesh, that he was lean to an extremity. His aspect was cheerful, and his speech and motion did both declare him a gentleman; for they were all so meek and obliging, that they purchased love and respect from all that knew him."

Herbert is to be classed as an Elizabethan poet of the second period, when quaintness was beginning to characterize poetry rather than strong feeling. The antithetic turn in l. 25, the repetition of the same word in two senses as in l. 35, the habit of using metaphors and figures—are all characteristic of the period. An understanding of Shakespeare's diction will help very much in teaching this poem of Herbert's.

The following characterization of his poetry by Mr. Saintsbury may prove helpful. "He expresses common needs, common thoughts, the everyday needs of the Christian, just sublimated sufficiently to make them attractive. The fashion and his own taste gave him a pleasing quaintness, which his good sense kept from being ever obscure, or offensive, or extravagant. The famous 'Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,' and many short passages which are known to every one, express Herbert perfectly. The thought is obvious, usual, in no sense far-fetched. The morality is plain and simple. The expression, with a sufficient touch of the daintiness of the time, has nothing that is extraordinarily or ravishingly felicitous whether in phrasing or versing. He is, in short, a poet whom all must respect; whom those who are in sympathy with his vein of thought cannot but revere; who did England an inestimable service by giving to the highest and purest thoughts that familiar and abiding poetic garb which contributes so much to fix any thoughts in the mind, and of which, to tell the truth, poetry has been much more prodigal to other departments of thought by no means so well deserving."—*Elizabethan Literature*, London, 1887, p. 373.

## II.—NOTES AND COMMENTS.

I. I.—*Who is the honest man?* "Honest" means here much the same as "just" in the Bible; the man of perfect character, the ideal man. The poet seems to have had two models before his mind in writing: the xv. Psalm, which begins with a question, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?" and contains as answer a description of such a man, "He that walketh uprightly, etc.," and second, the famous ode of Horace (Bk. iii. 9).

"Justum ac tenacem propositi virum  
Non civium ardor prava jubentium," etc.

"Neither the fierceness of the mob insisting on evil deeds, nor the face of the threatening tyrant, nor the southerly storm, the turbulent master of the restless Adriatic, nor even the strong hand of Jove himself with his thunder, can swerve from his fixed resolve the man who is just and constant in mind. Though the round world should crash together, the ruins would overwhelm him, still unfeared."

\* Charles Wolfe, born 1791; died 1823, an Episcopal clergyman, Dublin, author of "Sir John Moore" and "Jugurtha in the Desert."

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