

A SONG OF SLEEP.

Sleep on white wings through the silent
 Skies of midnight comes with peace;
 To the lonely brings the home-kiss,
 To the captive, sweet release;

For the sufferer smoothes the pillow,
 Whispering tender words and low;
 Leads the child to lands enchanted,—
 Woods where all things lovely grow.

To the sailor sings of meadows
 Safe beyond the sound of storm;
 For the lover, brings the clinging
 Of a dear hand white and warm;

To the mourner worn with sorrow
 Shows the lost, the longed-for face,
 Brings that One for whom they suffer,
 Folds them in his close embrace.

Sleep on white wings comes with comfort
 Through the midnight vague and vast.
 Leans above us, smiles and whispers:
 "Love shall conquer Death at last!"

ELIZABETH ROBERTS MACDONALD.

ENGLISH ESSAYS AND ESSAYISTS.

Once upon a time, in a little white house in a certain small but charming city, a club of young people met every week to read and discuss the English essayists. If any of those club-members happen to set eyes on this article, they will remember (I think with pleasure) those informal and unacademic meetings. They will recall the freedom with which we expressed our opinions, the vivacity with which we discussed the various authors, and in particular the ratings given to the learned Bacon for his mercenary views of life in all its relations!

Then what difficulty we had in finding a definition for the essay,—especially when some of us wanted to include Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding." Imagine a definition which should comprehend that massive treatise and one of Mrs. Meynell's tiny compositions! But when Locke was left out it was easier, and we finally decided that an essay might be called "A short essay or analysis of one subject." Admitting this definition, the word "short"

has to receive a very liberal interpretation, for some of Emerson's essays are far from short when compared with Bacon's or Lamb's. Then "essay or analysis" must not be taken too literally either, as we learn from one of Lamb's commentators that an essay must be "not merely a short analysis of a subject, not a mere epitome, but rather a picture of the writer's mind as affected for the moment by the subject with which he is dealing." In another place this commentator tells us that an essay "must be an artistic whole, and not an aimless wandering of the mind from one subject to another."

Ah well, let us decide that an essay cannot be strictly and accurately defined; at least we will agree that it is a delightful form of literature, and that we owe the English-writing essayists, from Bacon to Burroughs, a pleasant debt of gratitude.

Bacon said of his own essays: "like the late new halfpence, the pieces are small and the silver is good." These small essays, first published in 1597, have been the models for many succeeding writers. He calls them "counsels, civil and moral,"—which gives a further scope to the essay than some modern critics would allow it. But if any one knew what an essay ought to be, that person was surely Bacon! Dugald Stewart speaks of the inexhaustible aliment they furnish to our own thoughts, and the sympathetic activity they impart to our torpid faculties. Certainly their charm is not dimmed by time, and we read and re-read them, always with fresh appreciation of their beauty of style and flexibility of thought, and fresh exasperation over their worldly and "all-for-expediency" tone.

We turn from the essay called "Of Love" with the quiet and pitying conviction that there was at least one subject of which the sage knew nothing; the essay has simply been misnamed. When it comes to "Of Friendship" it is a little better. He dwells overmuch on the *advantages* of having a friend, and all the services a friend can render; but there are a few such lovely gleams as these:

"Little do men perceive what solitude is and how far it extendeth; for a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where