

# British Freedom

## A LESSON IN LITERATURE.

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(The following is merely a suggested treatment of this poem, and the teacher may find it advisable, according to conditions, to depart wholly or partially from the method here outlined).

It is not to be thought of that the flood  
Of British freedom, which to the open sea  
Of the world's praise from dark antiquity  
Hath flowed, "with pomp of waters unwithstood,"—  
Roused though it be full often to a mood  
Which spurns the check of salutary bands,—  
That this most famous stream in bogs and sands  
Should perish and to evil and to good  
Be lost forever. In our halls is hung  
Armoury of the invincible knights of old.  
**We must be free or die**, who speak the tongue  
That Shakespeare spake, the faith and morals hold  
That Milton held. In everything we are sprung  
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

In the teaching of this poem two difficulties are presented. In the first place, the poet has expressed his thought in the first eight lines in the form of a metaphor and the pupil may find it difficult to "translate" this metaphor so as to see its real meaning. In the second place, unless the pupil has a rich background of history and can appreciate some of the sources of Britain's greatness, the poem is not likely to appeal to him. The problem of the teacher must, then, be to present the poem to the class in such a way that the pupils will not only understand the poem but will feel, in as far as possible, the emotion of the poet.

Write the sonnet on the blackboard. In the case of a short poem it is always best to teach from the blackboard, since the poem forms a centre for focussing the attention of the class.

Before reading the poem introduce it by a short talk about the conditions under which it was written. In 1802 Napoleon gathered an army at Bologne, and threatened to invade Britain. Can you imagine, and get your class to imagine, the feelings of the British people? A reference to the present war may help. Suppose, for example, that the Germans were in full possession of France, that they possessed a power-