

That Homer is the best medium of accomplishing the latter part of the desideratum, the continuation of Homer as a boy's study throughout twenty centuries ought to be a convincing proof, if any were needed other than the nature of the study itself.

THE MORAL OF THE POETIC INSTINCT IN MAN.*

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"**P**OETA nascitur non fit," the poet is born not made. Most maxims have a flaw in their composition, the one quoted differs from the ordinary saw in being literally true. The poet *is* born, not made, and the truth is manifest in this, that every soul born into the world is born a poet. He may accomplish nothing, or, swan-like, he may sing himself through life to death. He may spend his days in ignoble silence, or, wrapt in the mantle of inspiration, he may weave his splendid webs of magical verse. But in either case man is a poet. In the one instance active, in the other potential. In the one instance diffusive, with external accomplishment, in the other latent with internal possibilities. One has ripened on earth, and the fruit of his song has fallen into the lap of his generation, the other has passed away immature, to ripen perhaps, in another, but, in his way, as great as his brother, who bequeathed his harvest of genius to posterity.

The first rational being was a poet. The present generation of rational beings are poets. The last rational being, in all probability, will be a poet. And thereby hangs a tale, or, rather, a suggestive train of thought. If the poetic faculty, or instinct, or call it what you will, be so omnipresent and omniscient, it was not bequeathed to man as part of his inalienable birthright, without a reason,

and in that reason is shrined a moral. the direct motive of my paper to-day, Let us examine the facts of the case. Is the poet born, not made? That is, is the poet a natural product, not an artificial one? Again, Are all men born poets? To the first question, ninety-nine out of a hundred, or, possibly, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand, will answer without a second thought, "yes"; for not everyone who says, go to, let us write poetry, seems able to accomplish the self-imposed task. After much labour and anguish of soul, and brain-cudgelling, and hearting and darting, and loving and doving, and many a coo and billet-doux, the offspring of the Muse may not improbably turn out to be but a sorry bantling, of whom his parent is ashamed. Rousseau-like, the author of its being, of fine theoretical tendencies, may feel inclined to drop his effusion into the foundling basket at his feet, into which have doubtless dropped many another crude and altogether unlovely infant from the same prolific source, the aspiring æsthetic instinct, without which, however, a man is a stock, and nature a soulless, senseless, sordid stock-exchange. Still, spite of bantling and foundling-basket, is the disappointed aspirant a poet. His very effort proclaims him one. His failure was due to want of expression, lack of literary culture, or a dozen similar causes. But his failure does not disprove his being born a poet, it simply intimates his inability to bequeath to another

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