

THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

Pedagogy

PEGASUS IN HIGH-SCHOOL

BY LOUIS UNTERMEYER

THIS—since I am dealing with the three R's—is a résumé, rebuttal and recantation. Since the last shall be first, let me start with confession. For years I had heard that the American high-school was the arch-foe of everything modern—especially modern poetry. I was informed, and I believed, that the tenth grade teacher constituted himself a defender of the Union League of American bards, beginning with Bryant and ending with Whittier, that he had sworn opposition to all new names or new ideas, and that his one aim as a patriotic pedagogue was to preserve the literary *status quo*.

The tradition still persists, but two cross-country tours of investigation have shaken my belief in it. A questionnaire, tricky and technical, riddled it completely. The moribund graybeards I expected to trap turned out to be extremely alert young fellows; the legendary schoolma'ams were perky ladies who quoted Romains, Spengler and Croce with ease and impartiality. But let me explain the questionnaire. . . . There seemed to be a need in the high-schools of these United States for a "comparative" anthology of poetry, and I seemed, somehow, the person to undertake it. This "comparative" anthology would do various things: 1. Arranged in two contrasting sections ("Yesterday" and "Today"), it would place the poetry of the Nineteenth Century against the poetry of the Twentieth. 2. By breaking down the strict limitations of the text-book, it would help solve the question whether poetry was something to "study" (using it as a problem in syntax, vocabulary-building, verbal mathematics, etc.) or something to be vulgarly

enjoyed. 3. By consulting the authorities in advance, it could be determined whether or not the spirit of poetry died when Queen Victoria gave up the ghost.

Accordingly a questionnaire was sent out to one hundred and fifty teachers of English and Literature in the high-schools throughout America. The places selected made the range as broad as possible—from the fashionable Horace Mann High-school in sophisticated up-town New York to the East High-school in Erie, Pa., and as far west as the Bonita High-school in La Verne, Calif. There was no "specializing"; the teachers to whom the questionnaire was submitted were in every case personally unknown to the compiler. The paper started off with six leading questions:

1. Should the volume contain chiefly poems inserted because (a) of their popularity, (b) the appeal of their authors' reputations, (c) their individual value?
2. Should only such poems be emphasized as (a) tell a story, or (b) teach a simple lesson, or (c) is it advisable to include some for the sake of mere music, association, color?
3. Should the level of the work approximate (a) the general average, or (b) the more intelligent?
4. Is poetry made more interesting to the reader by (a) a knowledge of its technique, (b) a familiarity with metrical terms, (c) a set of questions and suggestions for study?
5. In the following space write the names of those you consider (a) the six representative poets—English and American—of the Nineteenth Century, (b) the six leading poets—English and American—of the Twentieth Century.
6. Name three poems from each group that seem most likely to survive.

Here, it is obvious, the trap was wick- edly baited. But, to make sure of the quarry, an extra set of teeth was added in the form of a long list of poets of both periods. The roster began with Aldrich and ended with Yeats; it included the names of poets as esoteric as Edith Sitwell, as juvenile as Nathalia Crane, as homespun as Edgar A.

Guest. The teachers were requested to check all those poets they wished included, put a cross against those who should be omitted, and leave a blank wherever they were ignorant of the author.

The result was a cross-section of the high-school teacher's mind that was complete and surprising. It was quickly seen that those household gods, the New England poets, were no longer the Lares and Penates of the class-room. Strange and insidious forces, it appeared, had been at work in the last two decades. The rebellious pupil of 1906 was now in his mid-thirties and his point of view was not that of a generation ago. The word "modern" was no longer a synonym for indecent exposure, subversive ideas, sound and fury signifying Bolshevism. The statistical résumé of the replies established a series of amazing conclusions and a few curious paradoxes.

Of the 150 questionnaires sent out, 116 were returned fully answered. On the six leading questions the vote was as follows:

1. Thirty teachers favored poems chiefly because "of their popularity," twelve because of "the appeal of the authors' names," and seventy-four because of their intrinsic or "individual" value. Some of the teachers in the last division went so far as to add exhortations of their own, one of them (Charles L. Sanders of the High-school in Greenwich, Conn.) insisting that "a sufficiency of poems—especially modern poems—appears in print only because a particular author produced them. The measure of poetry is not the name of an author, but the nobility inherent in the work."

2. The vote on the second question was more evenly divided. Sixty-four came out for poems which "tell a story or teach a simple lesson," while (surprisingly enough) fifty-two maintained that the essence of poetry was the lyric spirit and that, in stressing the sensuous quality of verse, an editor could do no better than "take care of the sounds and the sense will take care of itself." A radical pronouncement that would have pleased the author of "Alice in Wonderland!"

3. Replies to this query showed the high-school teacher throwing tradition and the I. Q. to the winds. Only twenty-seven declared that the level of the work should "approximate the general average," whereas eighty-nine believed that the only hope lay in the education of the more alert. Speaking for these, William B. Elwell (Crosby High-school, Waterbury, Conn.) wrote: "One can only expose oneself to a poem; one can never 'teach' it. The teacher can do no more than impart some of his enthusiasm, and hope that if the pupil is saturated something may filter into the marrow of his being. . . . For this reason, I hope you will include some poems that are a bit *above* the heads of the average—a number to which they can grow, with meat enough for a second helping." And Bertha Evans Ward (Hughes High-school, Cincinnati, O.) concluded with the sound observation: "A collection containing only the obvious, no matter how well esteemed, would fail in the very purpose for which it was made."

4. The fourth question found the teachers on the fence. Torn between their own convictions and their duties as pedagogues, they could not decide without reservations. Naturally enough most of them (64) believed that interest in poetry is enhanced by a knowledge of its technique. Less (23) believed that a familiarity with such terms as amphibrach, spondee, and hendecasyllabic could be stimulating. But it was on the matter of "Suggestions for Study" that they were hopelessly divided. About half replied that the poems should elicit their own questions and answers, that anything "added to a poem" in the end subtracted from it. The other half declared frankly that it was the teacher as well as the pupil who needed the "supplementary suggestions,"—that, to quote A. Francis Trams (Joliet Township High-school, Joliet, Ill.), "the setting of good questions is almost the most important part of the editing."

5. By this time the teachers had determined their position. There was no hesitation as they set about choosing the

half dozen representative poets of the two centuries. The tabulated results showed this order:

<i>Nineteenth Century</i>	<i>Twentieth Century</i>
Alfred Lord Tennyson	Robert Frost
Walt Whitman	Rudyard Kipling
Robert Browning	John Masefield
Henry W. Longfellow	Edna St. Vincent Millay
Robert Louis Stevenson	Walter de la Mare
Emily Dickinson	Lizette Woodworth Reese.

I leave analysis of these selections until later. Meanwhile, it is significant to note that the New England group has disappeared, leaving Longfellow as its sole representative; that the pedagogues' vote might be that of most critics; and that the two lists show no chauvinism but are beautifully balanced, each one containing three English and three American authors.

6. The vote on the "three poems from each group that seem most likely to survive" revealed mixtures of taste and opinion. There was, however, no doubt about the first choice. The great majority registered in favor of Joyce Kilmer's "Trees," which has become the "Rosary" of American letters. For second place there was a neck-and-neck race; it was disputed by a most incongruous trio: Kipling's "Mandalay," Tennyson's "Ulysses," and Noyes's "The Highwayman." This established the fact that, though the teachers were "modern" as far as contemporary poets were concerned, their familiarity with the traditional notes, the smooth-flowing narrative, the thumping ballad, still conditioned their rhythmic responses.

But analysis of the returns disclosed a more radical *Weltanschauung* when the vote on the individual poets was tabulated. The final figures were a crescendo of surprises, the most astonishing of which was that, of the 116 replies, only one poet received a unanimous vote, and he was neither Tennyson nor Longfellow, but a living American, unknown twenty years ago, viz. Robert Frost. Altogether, 152 poets of the present and the immediate past were named, the order of the first twenty being as follows:

116	Robert Frost
114	Alfred Tennyson
113	Walt Whitman
112	Robert Browning
112	H. W. Longfellow
110	Rudyard Kipling
105	John Masefield
102	R. L. Stevenson
98	Edna St. Vincent Millay
96	Emily Dickinson
91	Walter de la Mare
89	Lizette W. Reese
86	Carl Sandburg
82	Ralph W. Emerson
82	Edgar Allan Poe
79	W. E. Henley
76	Rupert Brooke
74	Sara Teasdale
74	Christina Rossetti
68	Richard Hovey

Close on the heels of these came G. K. Chesterton, Edwin Markham, James Stephens, Nathalia Crane, Vachel Lindsay and Bliss Carman. Vitality, affirmation, definiteness, forthright optimism were evidently the notes on which emphasis was placed. The dark doubts of Hardy, the mystical overtones of Yeats, the cryptic skepticism of E. A. Robinson were denied a place—at least in the high-school.

A closer study of the finals is even more illuminating. One is struck, first of all, by the absence of the names of Alfred Noyes and Joyce Kilmer among the representative leaders, though their single poems are among the favorites. One remembers Mascagni and his multitudinous operas, of which only "Cavalleria Rusticana" survives. One remembers Leoncavallo and his "Pagliacci," Masters and his "Spoon River Anthology," Douglas and his "South Wind," and passes on. The couplings are queer. Browning and Longfellow are tied for fourth place; Emerson and Poe, who would have resented it violently, are paired in thirteenth; Sara Teasdale and Christina Rossetti are united by something more than a love-song. The order is still queerer and not at all what we would expect from schoolma'ams. Here is Whitman taking precedence over Longfellow, Sandburg over Emerson, the realistic Masefield over the so-romantic Rupert Brooke. Queerest of all are the omissions. Whittier does not appear in the first score; Bryant is twenty-

seventh on the list; Aldrich is forty-third. Service, the god of the Rotarians, rallies forty-six adherents, but more votes were accorded the less resounding and more recondite Ralph Hodgson, Amy Lowell, Siegfried Sassoon, Humbert Wolfe, and Elinor Wylie.

But perhaps the greatest surprise was the negative vote on Edgar A. Guest. Instead of leading all the rest, Our Eddie did not receive a single vote from those whose sacred duty it is to uplift American youth. Evidently (judging from their sharp, unsolicited comments in the place of a check or cross) they are training the young idea to hoot—at America's uncrowned poet laureate.

The net result of the investigation is yet to be ascertained. It remains a question

how much the teachers were guided by their own judgment and how much they were intimidated by the questionnaire. However, allowing for a certain playing up, it is indisputable (1) that the educational background is changing, (2) that literature is beginning to be taught as a living thing rather than as a problem in parsing, (3) that an approach to poetry is being made through the use of contemporary reflections of life rather than through the forbidding thrust of "classics." The Golden Day in American education may not yet have dawned, but the teachers of Hannibal (Mo.) and Bloomington (Ill.) are no longer living in the Dark Ages. Such conclusions may seem heterodox to the lay reader, but they are founded on figures and facts.

Theology

THE NEW BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

BY NELSON ANTRIM CRAWFORD

AT THE General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, held in Washington last year, a new Book of Common Prayer for America was put into its final form, and the Hon. J. Pierpont Morgan, LL.D., D.C.S., following the illustrious example of his sainted father at the time of the revision of 1892, offered to defray the cost of the Standard Book, the elaborate and beautifully printed volume from which all authorized copies must be made according to canon law. Thus a fifteen-year job of revision was finished. In 1913 a commission of seven bishops, seven priests, and seven laymen had been appointed to consider "the revision and enrichment of the Book of Common Prayer." Lest some Low Churchmen see the menace of the Vatican in this business, the same resolution provided that no doctrinal change should be made.

Whether this provision was observed will probably be argued to the time when the revisers, and their successors, are ushered into Paradise, but to a neutral ob-

server it seems clear that the atmosphere of the book has been altered in a Catholic direction. Many of the changes made were challenged in the General Conventions by Low Church spokesmen, who insisted that alterations of doctrine were involved. The objectors were invariably met, however, with the bland reply that the implicit doctrine of the Church was simply made explicit.

A notable novelty is the introduction, repeatedly, of prayers for the souls of the departed, one of them, in the Holy Communion office, made compulsory. Special prefaces to the Sanctus for All Saints' Day and for two festivals—the Purification and the Annunciation—in honor of the Blessed Virgin are introduced, and are likewise compulsory. The use of "Praise be to thee, O Christ!", a translation of the *Laus Tibi* of the Roman missal, is made permissive. The Episcopal Church in the United States is the only member of the Anglican Communion to adopt this usage. The *Our Father*, with a preface based on the ancient service books, is placed immediately after the Canon, and following it is the Prayer of Humble Access, so that these prayers are said before the consecrated elements on the