

AN ARCHER IN THE CHEROKEE HILLS.

ONCE upon a day — it was just at the welding-point, where spring is brazed upon summer with a sudden luminous, aromatic heat — I had a tent beside a bass-brook. The angling was good for two or three miles, up stream or down, while all about in the wood, practically speaking untouched of axe or saw, the birds and squirrels offered every delight known to the shooter in a longbow, the lover of nature, the man who has inside of him a remnant of sweet savagery. But I was somewhat unhappy.

An accident — the snapping short in twain of my only weapon — had badly crippled my resources; for when the upper limb of my bow broke, just at full draw, as I was aiming upon a fine male summer duck, a gorgeous target indeed, there ended the better half of my sport. Moreover, when the piece sprang off with a keen crack, it gave me a blow across the head not so much milder than a Hibernian policeman deals when a street-corner fight is on. And there, quite alone, I stood, both bereft and belabored, — all on account of a machine-made bow with a flaw in its wood aggravated by two years' lack of adequate seasoning.

There can be little to say, at the best, upon a matter of despair. An outing is rarely flexible or ductile. You have seven or fourteen days, no more, at the command of delight: those days are infinitely precious; you must compress into them a multitudinous realization of all the pleasures accumulated during perhaps a whole year of anticipatory longing — and your bow breaks on the second morning of your golden vacation, leaving you gaping at space twenty miles deep in a lonely forest!

I held one piece of the faithless weapon in my left hand; the other piece lay on the ground at my boot-toes. Mean-

time, the gayly penciled wood-duck — which is also called summer duck, as I have said — did not fly, but swam in a small circle on the brook's cheerful water, eying me askance. Inwardly, very deep, something belonging to my temperament exploded, sending a blaze through blood and brain, making a fierce light by which I chose my epithets; but the subtlest of these could not mend the bow. It would have been partial compensation had the duck but taken to wing; for its evident willingness, even anxiety, to be shot at was now like an insult unbearable. And when at last, frightened by my raging voice, it did fly away, twinkling between the plane-trees above the brook, it left me in no mood for the congratulations offered by an officious blue jay.

Probably most men and all women have enough common sense to comprehend why, my sylvan archery thus abruptly ended, the joys of the fishing-tackle fell stale. What you lose is ever the very thing upon which all other things depended for the leaven of delectability. Striding back to my tent in melodramatic indignation, I was further worried by three young squirrels, toothsome to look at, hanging low on the bole of a big tulip-tree. Nature appears to have a sense of humor, vast, profound, immitigable. I could not keep from laughing somewhat hysterically at what my predicament suggested. There is something, indeed, positively ludicrous in the picture of an archer out shooting in the wild-wood without a bow!

"Integer vitæ scelerisque purus
Non eget Mauris jaculis, neque arcu
Nec venenatis grævida sagittis,
Fusce, pharetra."

As a master of archery, I have doubts whether Horace knew how to nock an arrow or loose a string; his adventure

with the wolf in the Sabine wood may seem to have that weight dear in the estimation of schoolmen, — likely enough! — but the practical archer brings even to Latin verse a sense of that grin supposable to the countenance of a fierce beast, *quale portentum*, the like not elsewhere to be found, when it concluded to run from an unarmed poet. But then Horace was singing of a girl by the name of Lalage — the wolf did right. To escape from a bard big with a love-song is the first law of nature.

Still, it was in a doleful mood that I reached my tent and sought philosophy in a pipe abetted by the seventh idyl of Theocritus. Know that my pipe was French brier-root, with but one stop, and that for tobacco, not bucolic wind. I like perhaps overwell to read about pastoral tootings, yet as a concrete fact I prefer a frog to a flute; his noise is the better, and his flesh, when broiled upon a bed of hickory coals, is ambrosial. You will dress the game thus: skin his hinder legs and loins, whack them off, wash them in the brook; be quick and lay some bruised cress thereon, vigorously rubbing it for a minute; then wash again, salt, pepper, insert a clove; then to the coals for a hot, crisp broiling, while your palate trembles for joy and while a cardinal grosbeak sings in the haw bush yonder.

This particular idyl, the *Thalysia*, is to Theocritus what the *Ode to a Nightingale* is to Keats, — evidently the song he takes closest into favor. Reading it in a wild-wood gives just the light for safe criticism, as reading the *Ode* under a lamp in the library best reveals what Keats imprisoned in his immortal phrasing. Where and when has an outing been described so perfectly and with such fitting enthusiasm as in this golden idyl of *Cos*? How does Theocritus manage to make one feel the very dust of the country road under one's eager feet, with an abounding youthful sense of hurrying on toward the distant farm, where

amid loaded orchards, beside the fountain, Demeter's feast is spread? Like all true poets, he was a boy, his genius had heyday in it; he would rather play than work. There he gets sympathy universal by touching the core of truancy in us all.

And what direct, unhindered vision he lets fall upon his simple little drama! The shepherd fellow they meet, he of the tawny goat-hide dress, with a fine friendly smile on his face, stands forth alive, full-blooded, a trifle rank as befits one fresh from cheese-making, but he is a poet with a manuscript in his pocket which he aches to read. Alas! poets are built so. Theocritus, too, is prepared in like manner for any chance of mouthing his latest song. It is not in the record, but I suspect that both of his companions, Eucritus and Amyntas, had a few verses hidden somewhere about their clothes. And there in the highway at noontide, while even the lizard dozed on the stone wall and the larks were hiding from the heat, they stood and spouted their melodious Greek, doubtless perspiring freely, especially Lycidas, wrapped in his shaggy he-goat hide! After that they parted; Theocritus and his two chums going on to the harvest feast, Lycidas disappearing leftward down a road toward Pyxa.

Now again the pebbles clinked and hummed under their hurrying shoes; far behind them fell the tomb of Brasilas. The fair Amyntas showed the fairer for the flush of exercise, and all three together tumbled down when they at last reached the farm, stretching their tired young limbs on a fragrant bed of leaves. Ah, but how delightful the feel of such a couch under the poplars and elms, beside the bubbling well! Cicadas in sunburnt coats rasped away at their shrill tunes amid the dusky foliage overhead; in the distant thorn thicket something lilted softly; finches and larks and doves were at full cry, while golden insects whirled above the shining water.

Summer was kissing Autumn; the seasons were blending their riches, loading the air with fruity and winy odors, while some jugs, sealed up four years ago, were opened for the feast. Delicious!

Now, if anything could have consoled me in the matter of my broken bow, this reading was just it; and yet when I heard the gray squirrels barking in the hickories over beyond the brook, I flung down Theocritus with a thump; there was no comfort for me. Out of the brook's prettiest dimple, right there before my tent, up leaped a twelve-inch bass, making a fine liquid note as he broke the surface. What of it? The one thing I wanted was my bow. Perhaps if I had broken my fly-rod desire would have been reversed: the bow might have appealed to me in vain while the squirrels scampered and chattered.

Partly by accident, yet more by the fine instinct of a mountaineer who bore me to the spot, I had camped in a most charming place. From the tent's door to the brook the distance was three jumps of a hare, so that, sitting there, I heard the lulling swash of small waves among polished stones, — a very good noise to sleep with, going through a dream so fittingly, disturbing it (as a soft wind stirs drowsy summer foliage) only to deepen or brighten it. All around the wood was old, stately, primeval, filled with tender gloom, permeated with gratefully musty odors. Blue mountains notched the sky, wherever a glimpse of distance could be had, with iris tints on vagrant fleecy-clouds above, while down the rocky slopes masses of pine and jack-oak boscaje alternated without any distinct lines of separation. A furlong or more beyond the brook one of those indefinite mountain roads meandered toward some obscure goal. Along it, at rare intervals, an ox-cart clattered. I could hear the driver's petulant voice. Each going-by interested me, for I was expecting Claude to join me, coming direct from home.

To make a short story long, he did arrive on the following morning, a right cheerful apparition, trudging over from the road, loaded like a pack-mule, but singing gayly: —

"Should like to play my way
Through the starry fields to heaven,
As the slugging centre-rush
Of a football eleven!"

He was an undergraduate, clean, doughty, pink-and-white, looking as if just forth from the baths of the gymnasium. Not in the least an archer, but untiring with bass-tackle, he eyed the stream knowingly while crossing it on a log blown bridgewise over from bank to bank long ago. He wore the very smile of Lycidas. And the first thing he unpacked was a magnificent yew bow, sent me by a friend in London; next out came a sheaf of hunting-arrows ready for the string. That bow was, as it still is, a thing of beauty. Yonder it now stands in a corner of my library bookshelves, with two others, also gifts from English archers. Yet I bought each of them at a startling price; for be it known that a yew bow from London, valued at £11 10s., is held in the New York Custom House pending the time in which a draft for enormous duties must be sent. But the beautiful, the super-excellent weapon is cheap at any price, — hand-made, unbreakable with just usage, unchangeable, growing springier, sweeter of cast, more valuable, every day, like a violin of Cremona.

Not long ago I read a newspaper man's very detailed description of how to make a good longbow, but with his first paragraph he spoiled his science, as a duffer always must. "Hickory," he said, "hickory is the best wood for a bow." You should see a true archer smile at that; for a hickory bow is a heavy, sluggish, worthless stick, about as resilient as putty. The same journalist fetched out once again that sear fable of amazing feats of archery done by our Western savages. In fact, the Indian is not, and never was, even a fairly good

bowman, albeit at short range he could hit a buffalo somewhere between brisket and hip with his rudimentary arrows. And his bow!—it is no more to be compared to the symmetrical weapon turned out by a London bowyer than a tom-tom is to a Spanish guitar. It is, indeed, an abomination of both material and craftsmanship.

May I tell the history of my best bow, the dark one nearest the wall? Plaything, the newspaper wise man named the like, in comparison with a five-foot *bois d'arc* (he called it hickory) segment of a hogshead-hoop, hight a bow, in the hand of a half-naked Sioux buck! It came from a yew-tree of Spain to the London workshop, a billet in the rough, but to be split out with care; and not a flaw in it. The bowyer scrutinized it with the connoisseur's knowing eye, found it perfect, laid it up to season. And for five years,—dream of it!—for five long years that billet passed from stage to stage, slowly hand-worked into a bow; then yet another year it was tested and polished before I could have it. From the strongly wrought horn nock-tips to the green plush handle midway between, it is a comfort to look upon; you might well call it a sonnet in wood. A hickory bow, indeed! and an Indian archer! With this yew, at eighty yards, I shot nine out of eleven arrows through a gourd eight inches in diameter.

My delight now spilled over; I clutched the bow, snatched it out of Claude's hands, as if some enchantment might whisk it away before I could absolutely realize it. How evenly it flexed from tip to tip, save where the handle stiffened it! I laid my ear to the taut string and thrummed out Diana's hunting-note, or was it the yew-tree's song brought from the windy hills of old Spain? Just above the handle shone a plate of mother-of-pearl set in the wood for the arrows to slide upon. A goodly sprinkle of gray in my hair; still, was a boy ever happier? But that summer duck —

Claude went his way with rod and creel, while I set off over a hill-spur to intercept the brook far above, where amid water - weeds and grass - tufts it flowed in desultory windings from pool to pool. On the way I must try the new bow and fresh hunting-shafts at knots on logs, low - hanging sprays of foliage, or whatever offered a mark. Light in hand, as a bow must be, sweet of cast, with that indescribable energy possessed by yew, it made shooting a matter of high satisfaction, like that of poetry when we read Anacreon's fragments or Shelley's odes; only there is an added physical romance in the act of archery out in an ancient wood. If you should hear the windlike sough and the keen stroke of a blunt-headed arrow, you would have a sense of a glad new force in the air, — or an old one called forth again.

In those hills of Cherokee Georgia the wild flowers take what time pleases them for blooming. Violets, larger than I have seen elsewhere, painted sky-blue spaces on the slopes; yellowroot, purple geranium, and all the sweet gush of spring's veins made a flow of delicate colors beside lichen-frilled rocks, or decorated the buttressed roots of the trees. I remember taking for target a tuft of wild pink, my arrow knocking the blooms into a dust of rosy tints that floated a moment, then went out like an extinguished light.

On thinly wooded ridge-tops birds are always few, but descending toward watered lands you find them in greater number, till in the thickets fringing the brooks they sing distractingly in every avian key, fighting the while, or rushing in pursuit of what to fill their crops withal; a bedlam of phrases, a delirium of color and motion. This is true more particularly where you cross the path of migration earlier in the spring, at a time when clouds of oscines are passing northward toward their immemorial nesting-places.

The sylvan archer, taking his too scant and infrequent outing, is more or less a pot-hunter, partly from necessity, somewhat by yielding to the strong clutch of temptation. He must not be criticised by tender-minded persons who never felt the old sweet ancestral savage emotion churning their blood, when a November frost, proclaiming the quail and partridge, sent a whistling shaft of nipping wind over the stubble; rather let a sympathizing sportsman do the weighing of motives and the reckoning of values. For my part, being deep in the wilderness where the word "trespass" is obsolete, when I am hungry for bird-flesh, let the bird beware, as the worm and butterfly must beware of the bird, as the wren must dodge the shrike.

While yet the sun was low in the east, a dewy chill lingering in the mountain air, I reached the little marshy flats bordering my brook two miles above the tent. Here I had expected to surprise a wood-duck or two in the puddles of water which were surrounded with rims of tall grass. Not a feather, not a wagging, brilliant head, not a webbed foot, however, was there, — only a small bittern, lank as a toothpick, flew up before me; so I stole down-stream beyond the flats, and just in the edge of the wood up flashed a woodcock like a dull yellowish blaze. I marked his flight to where he went down; but I could not find him. He must have run far.

The banks of the stream rose higher as I passed on into a forest of scattered oaks, where broomsedge in thin wisps dotted the stony ground. Here meadow-larks, two or three pairs, appeared to be nesting, while aloft in the treetops rang the woodpecker hammers, like the rapping of carpenters heard far away. At a place on a bluff of the bank a thicket of haw bushes hung over the water. Behind this I crept, foreseeing that from its cover I could have a long look down-stream over a straight, quiet reach of silver on which my duck might be disporting.

Sneaking upon game, as we archers call this crafty method of outwitting wary birds, is a cat's art, in which light stepping and the very poetry of skulking are chief elements. Such pursuit is its own reward; for, hit or miss, when at last the shot is sped, you have done a difficult thing in coming within bow range of a bird born to the business of seeing you first. On hands and knees I slipped through that dense, fragrant bosket, till I could peep forth over the water, holding in my left hand the bow, in my right a steel-pointed, red-feathered arrow carefully selected.

And there indeed was the duck, close in by the bank, but down-stream too far. I must get nearer, at least forty paces nearer, to feel reasonably sure of a fair shot at a target so small; but how, seeing that I should have to break cover and trust only to chance objects for masking myself? Nearer yet to the ground I shrank, going now serpent fashion, wriggling from tree to sedge-tuft, from rock to weed-fringe, all the time gazing at the duck, taking swift advantage of its every moment of inattention. I had chosen a little dogwood-tree, with low-hanging boughs, for my station to shoot from, albeit the foliage was thin, scarcely cover at all; and when I reached it, the thing was how to get upon my feet all unseen.

Even this I accomplished by slow stages, a great strain to nerves and muscles, — rising as the hand of a clock moves, rigidly, imperceptibly. Now the duck was preening a gay wing, sitting at a half-turn upon the water not ten feet from the bank; the distance was fifty-five paces, a slightly plunging shot through a rift in the dogwood foliage. I stood a moment to feel my circulation right itself; then I drew. And it was a shot of great beauty, although bloodless, even featherless. The arrow fell barely short, with a bright splash, piercing the shallow water, so that it stood fixed aslant in the clay bottom, its three carmine vanes quivering like the wings of a

dragonfly. But the duck, — it spat one rasping quack, its feathers all stood up separately; then it flew as if shot from a mortar, a shimmering rocket between the dusky trees.

For an hour or more I lay under the dogwood resting, enjoying the incident just closed, while two mocking-birds beyond the brook fluted an amœbean sketch, a cardinal grosbeak joining in now and again with its jubilant whistle. In the opposite bank a pair of belted kingfishers had their nest-hole, about which they hovered at intervals, diving into it once or twice. A pewee flycatcher amused me for a while. He had lit on a piece of driftwood protruding from the water, from which perch he darted in every direction to take insects on the wing, always returning to the same place. A meek, solemn little bird, with a sad falsetto voice; he probably killed fifty gnats while I watched him work. And what a monster those tiny things must have thought him! In his crop he held a whole army of them. He is one of my best companions, coming to me in the loneliest places of the woods, from the far north even to the Gulf coast islands; always the same demure, feeble-looking dwarf, half stupid, yet strangely agile.

It is worth while. I dare say, to be idyllic one fortnight out of the whole rushing, grinding, practical year. An hour like that under the dogwood-tree gives to the ancient centre of one's life a bath of primitive freshness, with a nameless shock, dreamy, pervading, reminiscent. How clear the water's flow! And yonder arrow fixed in the current, gently wagging, its feathers a glowing red flower on a pale polished stem, communicates with the archer lying here; tells him of innumerable joys caught far and away by streams, meadow-lands, willow thickets, mangrove islands, and along the breezy coast-haunts of plover, the home of the pelican, the lonely sand beaches between the sea and the everglades — the story beams as it unfolds.

But I must trudge on, even wade in to get my arrow; for it is a good one of its sort, having the "solid" flight, that best evidence of high art in the fletcher's shop. Standing half knee-deep in the chill water, I had just plucked up the shaft, when far off down-stream a glint caught my eye. It was such a ray as a green flag leaf darts when wind and sun strike it together; but it was in the air midway between the water and the overhanging boughs. Ha! the duck coming back! Claude, as he went whipping along, had flushed it in a pool down below, as I correctly surmised, doing me a good turn by one of those charming accidents upon which optimism dines sumptuously.

Some day when your opportunity arrives, please observe the flight of a wood-duck coming head on into your eyes; for there is something delicately finished, so to speak, in the picture it offers, a trembling sketch in half-tints, driving along like a cloud-wisp in a gale, or a gay fairy yacht at utmost speed, listing sharply to this side and that. For a moment or two you may see it apparently nearly level with your eyes; but with its approach it seems to lift rapidly, showing its under parts more and more, its shimmering breast, its backward-pointing feet, its short tail. Before you are master of yourself, you staring duffer, the scudding bird has whisked overhead, — gone like a shooting star. And you forgot that you were out for game and had a weapon, did you?

Not so with the sylvan archer trained from boyhood in the school of sudden chances. The unexpected is always met halfway, bluff for bluff, with all that promptness and imperturbable nerve can do; otherwise the archer would be a forlorn tramp in the wilderness, his larder empty, his spirit sour. Up went my bow-arm, the arrow's nock jumped to the string, the bow bent until the cool steel shaft-point kissed my left forefinger knuckle. Then in my head a flash of

mathematics, a nice intricate problem of highest calculus was solved to fix my aim just adequately ahead of, and apparently above, the hurtling target. How long would it be going, this updrawn missile, from the bowstring to the point where it would cut the duck's line of flight? And meantime how far would the duck fly? You see the difficulty! A wink of time in which to solve it.

Correct habit is the secret of great shooting. When Horace A. Ford, the master bowman of modern England, did his wonderful target practice, it was always at one or another of three accurately measured ranges, so that he had but three points of aim to fix in his memory; moreover, his targets were motionless. But think of the sylvan archer's infinitely varied predicaments, his sliding scale of distances, situations, objects; and then contemplate a flying duck. The wonder of wing-shooting with the bow affects me as curiously now, after years of performance sufficiently pleasant, as when the first bird fell to my shot in the flush of vigorous boyhood. It seems a sort of guesswork, touched with both science and romance, reduced to the mechanical accuracy of habit; yet I always know, at the moment the arrow quits the string, whether my shot will hit or miss.

The shot of which I am now telling is one of the rubricated and gold-lettered records of my archery, an event serving as a perfect standard of reference. I let go the arrow cleanly, so that it sped like a bee, and it met the duck's breastbone at the fork, stopped the flight in a puff of down and feathers, just as Claude came in sight round the stream's distant turn. He saw it all. Before the duck could fall straight down to the water, off went the young man's cap with a wild flourish of approbation, while he gave his class yell and danced in the silver current, his fly-rod quivering limberly.

We two met a little farther down, where we compared bag and creel. He had three small bass against my male

wood-duck. Of them all together we could make a dinner not to be surpassed in the best restaurant, considering what other good things we had at the tent. Hunger smacks its sensuous lips in the wilderness, winks a greedy eye at anything cookable. Ah, but the savor of a spitted bird must be great when it can follow one five hundred miles and hold fast for almost ten years! "Sed alba non sine Coo;" the white, sweet wine of freedom must have done its part, while all around the wood-thrushes, those pipers of the golden reed, filled the air's most lonesome deeps with their phrases.

Culture's sips are grateful to the taste; one feels how the world needs the presence of refinement more and more; but freedom, even savage liberty, must be preserved as a thoft-fellow who will pull the boat of life lustily enough when culture sickens or shirks. I am conscious of my own need; this greedy glance I turn upon the few unshorn nooks of mountain, fen-land, shore waste, forest, is not a mere affectation; the thing I long for is freshness, the smell of a lonely wood at twilight, the break of day with dew and birds, where nature has not been lopped and repaired beyond recognition. It is medicine, it is cheer, recreation, a return to the authentic standard, this draught of what my distant ancestors drank, from morning till night, all the days of their lives.

And now that my yew had come, the mere shooting-desire burned rapidly down; for the best of sylvan archery is to stray and loiter, bow in hand, to and fro and round about, with imagination for company, spying upon the birds at their nesting, the plants at their blooming or fruiting or seeding, while exercise brings a glow to limb and countenance. To play as a child plays,—there is true recreation, with no person anear to curl a lip at you, but with enormous Mother Nature coddling you, encouraging you, for a whole fortnight. Yet I shot a great deal, shot till my arms ached; the woods will

remember me by the arrow-scars on bole and bough, high up, low down, where the blunt piles struck off the bark with whacks that rang clear and far.

It was during this outing that I made a careful study of the cardinal grosbeak. There were many in the haw thickets, where they had nests full of young, one brood taking wing before I broke up camp. The nest of this bird is seldom built high; usually the place chosen for it is a crotch, or a point where several small boughs converge, well hidden by foliage. And what fighters the little red cocks are! They pounce with fury upon every other bird coming near the nest, striking with wings and beak, scolding raucously meantime. The cardinal's cry, or song, is a loud, defiant, boisterous phrase whistled in the major key, filling a whole wood with cheerfulness. It sounds to me like "wheep-ear, wheep-ear, wheep-ear, wheep!" given in a shrill yet mellow fife-tone. The red feathers of the cock are dazzling, but the little hen shows only a tinge of dull carmine on her sober grayish plumage.

I got into a row with a pair of cardinals one morning, the whole proceeding on their part showing shameless ingratitude. Hearing some blue jays making a great noise in a wild plum thicket not far from the tent, I took up my bow and went to see what was the matter for such a hubbub. A mob of jays had surrounded a little hawk which I soon discovered in the middle of a plum-tree, where he sat quite still, evidently afraid. He saw me, however, and made a dash to break the line of his enemies; but he could not go far, they worried him so. I ran forward under cover of some low foliage, presently reaching a point from which I could shoot at short range, and

brought him down. Now the jays turned tail and flew away. But it had chanced that I shot from very close beside a cardinal's nest; indeed, my right elbow jostled it at the recoil of the bow. Then came trouble. Both redbirds assaulted me, pouncing at me with vicious beak-snappings, almost striking me in the face. They seemed not to account it anything that I had slain the marauder who would have made a meal upon one of them or their tender nestlings. Such is avian gratitude.

After a certain period spent in the woods, sometimes three days, sometimes three weeks, the romance of it cloys, falls stale. I am as eager to get back to my desk as I was to go away from it. I have eaten enough ambrosia; give me once more the solid diet of workaday life. But I bring back with me from the lonely places something, I know not what, like a smack of wild honey, that sweetens my memory for a year, or until another outing comes round. And so, taking leave of the notes from which this sketch is drawn, I fling one of them back over my shoulder, a Parthian shaft whizzing from a thicket beyond Tuccoa and Tallulah. Here it is:—

"May 19. Made a pretty shot this morning. It was from behind a rock on a hillside. Shot across a ravine and hit a young hare. The rock was in a thicket of blackberry and other bushes. As I stepped in the hare bolted out, ran down into the ravine and up the other side to a point opposite. It was a tangled place to shoot from; but I dared not move for fear of losing the main chance. Let drive, the briers tearing the back of my bow-hand. Centre drop. Clipped him behind the ears. *Le pauvre lapin*, I have already eaten him!"

Maurice Thompson.

"THE SONG O' STEAM."

"I'm sick of all their quirks an' turns — the
loves an' doves they dream —

Lord, send a man like Robbie Burns to sing
the Song o' Steam!"

RUDYARD KIPLING, *McAndrew's Hymn*.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Kipling has furnished the text, this brief paper is in no way intended as a criticism or even as an examination of his verse. That he has in various places expressed more or less distinctly a sentiment similar to that which he here puts into the mouth of McAndrew is for the moment of less consequence than the fact that many moderns share the feeling with him. Often vaguely phrased and doubtless vaguely felt, but not infrequently explicitly held and stated, the opinion becomes more common every day that the poetry of the future is to be the poetry of science and invention, of steam and electricity, of microbes and bacteria; in short, of the triumphs of the intellect of man. The inquiry into such a theory is naturally one of intense interest; and while only the future can settle the question, speculation upon it has much fascination, and is not without value from the light which it may cast upon the nature and conditions of literary art.

I.

To understand what material is adapted to poetic use, it is necessary to have some definite idea what poetry is and what is its function. To endeavor to define either within the limits of a magazine article is almost certainly to appear dogmatic, from lack of space to justify conclusions. The risk must be to some extent faced for the sake of having at least an established point of departure; although nothing more need be attempted than to give a working rather than a completely philosophical definition.

Like all art, poetry is essentially an attempt to convey emotion. Whatever

form and whatever material it employs, whatever appeal it makes to the intellect or to the imagination, all are but means to this chief end of arousing the feelings.

The proposition has the air of a truism. Nobody is likely to contend that it is the office of poetry to convey information, while didactic poems have at least done so much as to establish the conviction that it is not the mission of verse to moralize. It is necessary to examine our definition a little, however, from the difficulty of being sure just what is meant in it by "emotion." The interpretation given to this word and the limits which are thus set to the boundaries of the art of poetry may determine the whole question which we have to consider.

The term "emotion" may be so extended in meaning as to include all human feeling which is secondary to sensation; but a single thought makes it clear that there is somewhere a division between feelings which are and those which are not suited to poetic treatment. The division may be made according to the importance of a given sentiment. The feelings of a child with a cake or an apple are genuine, and very likely intense; yet the issue involved is so trivial, when measured by the great realities of life, as to make infant emotions unworthy of high poetic treatment. We do not seriously receive as poetry Thackeray's gay little verse in *The Rose and the Ring*: —

"Oh, what fun to have a plum bun!
How I wish it never were done!"

Distinction may also be made in accordance with the nearness of given sensations to normal human experiences. The sentiments of a man in fantastically unreal surroundings, for instance, do not as a rule seize the imagination of the reader. The emotional experiences of Thalaba are hardly nearer to sane humanity than