

Slovenian seem to have held their existing northwestern boundaries for over a thousand years. The Kutzo-Vlachs on the slopes of Pindus, though a very small fragment of the Rumanians, have resisted assimilation through hundreds of years. No doubt the merely residual national groups will tend to disappear under the influence of modern industrialism. But to produce homogeneity in any possible system of states in central and eastern Europe will be a work of centuries.

A. J.

## Poetry and the Child

*The Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children, edited by Kenneth Grahame. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.*

TO endow a nation with taste one would have to begin with the cradle and then hope for results in two or three generations. Certainly one of the most important things that can be done for a child is to let it listen to poetry from the very beginning of its career. It might be possible to make a very arguable thesis out of the statement that we are an inartistic nation because the American child for generations has been swamped in realism to the stultification of the imagination and in Puritanism to the frustration of all sensuous perceptions. No one will wish to deny that mathematics has been the chief concern of our public school system and that the popular books among children have been painfully realistic. Think of the tremendous vogue of the Louisa M. Alcott books and the army of her imitators! These books doubtless offered good ideals, freshness, vivacity and charm, but they would hardly take the place of an early intimacy with Froissart's *Chronicles* and Mallory's *Morte D'Arthur*.

England, more fortunate than any other European country in her great line of poets, has for centuries past trained her boys on the classics and this has led them by easy stages to Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Keats as reading matter rather than as an arduous school task. If we want a nation with taste, there is but one way—the way of fostering art interests from the cradle. Above all, the world poetry should be offered a child from the cradle days.

For this purpose the nursery itself must be furnished with good anthologies and thus far no perfect one has been made for very little children. Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* serves the second stage of childhood. This anthology can be offered an average child at the age of seven and it is a stand-by for life. From babyhood until seven the best anthology is still Whittier's *Child-Life*, although it ought now to be amplified from writers of genius who have appeared since it was published.

No one who knows Kenneth Grahame's *Dream Days*, *The Golden Age*, and *The Wind in the Willows* can doubt that the author was reared on the English poets and is himself a poet of parts and therefore ought to be the right person to make a new anthology for little children. His *Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children* is well divided into three sections—"For the very smallest ones," all of these might easily be absorbed by the time a child is five years old; "For those a little Older," the longest division and most useful for the next five years of a child's life; "For those still Older," a division that would hardly carry the child more than two years further.

If there is one general fault in the *Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children* it is that of underrating the child's intelligence. One can feel fairly sure that a poetry-loving child of ten would set the book aside for the younger

children and turn to something fuller and richer, such as *The Golden Treasury*. The editor admits that his gleanings amount to but a small sheaf, but adds that for those children who do not like poetry it will be enough, and for those who love it no selection will ever be adequate. Even so, fifty-four poems for children "still Older" seems a meagre allowance. There are omissions that make one gasp. Moreover, the editor has taken the liberty of cutting poems into pieces and giving bits, without any explanation of his omissions, so that children who already knew the poems would resent the omissions and children who later fell upon the complete poems, of which they knew only scraps, would resent their early misleading.

As to omissions, Mr. Grahame has a section devoted to Green Seas and Sailor Men, from which he has omitted Henry Newboldt's *Fighting Temeraire* and *Admirals All*. Three supreme poets for very little children, Robert Louis Stevenson, Christina Rossetti and Josephine Preston Peabody, are practically ignored; the last two entirely, while Robert Louis Stevenson has but one selection taken from his marvellous *Child's Garden of Verse*. On the other hand, there is more than enough of Eugene Field and Longfellow. Field's *Contentment*, with that horrid line, "The eggs eventuated bad," might well have been omitted, and the sentimental song, *Mother and I*, should have kept it company in exclusion. The writer did not, fortunately, include Longfellow's *I Stood on the Bridge at Midnight*, and *Tell Me Not in Mournful Numbers*, but he might likewise have left out *A Dutch Picture*. The poem chosen from Elizabeth Barrett Browning is one of her very worst, *The Lost Bower*, overflowing as it is with her usual bad rhymes, "daily" and "valley"; "closes" and "losses"; "hazels" and "dazzles"; "clenching" and "branching"; "run" and "anon"; "hushing" and "cushion"; "reed" and "head"; "laughing" and "half-in";—a long list even for a poem of thirty-three stanzas. If Mrs. Browning is to be represented surely that poignant lyric, *The Musical Instrument*, deserved to go in. William Allingham's

"Up the airy mountain,  
Down the rushy glen  
We daren't go a hunting  
For fear of little men."

is appropriately included as well as almost all the loveliest child lyrics from Blake. Jean Ingelow's *Echo* and the *Ferry* are poor substitutes for the *Songs of Seven*, but right after these comes Wordsworth's *Poor Susan's Dream*, and the reader is appeased.

The author takes many liberties with titles, giving his own when it pleases him, so that Browning's poem *Memoabilia* appears as *Something to Remember*, and three couplets from Blake's *Proverbs* are given the title *Three Things to Remember*.

Among the unexpected poems are some lovely bits by W. B. Rand; a charming and little known verse by Amy Lowell; two by John Davidson that we have never before seen in *Children's Anthologies*; one very beautiful selection from Sydney Dobell, one by Norman Gale, one by H. M. Maugham. Of Ann and Jane Taylor there is altogether too much. Omissions occur that are annoying, among others the first two lines of the blessed *Bridget's prayer*—

"God bless my hut from thatch to floor,  
The twelve Apostles guard my door,  
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John  
Guard the bed I lie upon."

Probably the best introduction to any criticism of an anthology is to state that every one should be his own anthologist, and there could be no better training for a child than to teach him from the very beginning to collect his own favorite poems and make his own anthology.

The Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children is not so good as *The Golden Treasury*; it is more carefully and poetically chosen than Mrs. Kate Douglas Wiggin's *Golden Numbers*. It is for little children and suits about the same age as Whittier's *Child-Life*, though the last contains four or five times as many poems. Though it is natural to have hoped for better things from so able a writer as Kenneth Grahame, the book is still a good one for the average child to use until he is about ten years old, when, if he does not demand more and better poetry he will doubtless be doomed to increase that vast number of people who make up a nation without taste.

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## Padraic Colum

ALTHOUGH William Butler Yeats was the founder of the Irish Literary Theatre it is a significant fact that the influence of his personality on the movement was generative rather than formative. Out of the shadowy twilight that enfolded him he evolved poignant and perilously beautiful things, but practically the entire group of poets and dramatists that leaped so ambitiously to his side turned their faces another way and found in the steaming soil and struggles of the Irish peasantry their proper inspiration. No mystic twilight, full of the milk-white feet of faeries, shed its subdued glow on their work. It was rather a red sun that shone down. Mr. Yeats, unconsciously perhaps, suggested a personal movement in which the poet was a determinative moulder of theme and treatment, but the writers who followed him enlarged it into a national movement. Through this wise and logical course resulted the vitality of the Irish renaissance.

Leaving aside the names of Synge, A.E., Lady Gregory and Mr. Yeats, not one of the younger Irish writers is better known in America than Padraic Colum and he is the antithesis of the esoteric Yeats. While Mr. Yeats started in poetry and ended in drama Mr. Colum started in drama and has apparently ended in poetry. Now that several volumes of his work are accessible it is easy to see why this should be so. The genius of Mr. Colum is essentially a personal one and the sensations he experiences find their more lucid exposition in poetry. But at the same time he found in drama an instrument with which to present certain fundamental truths about Ireland.

When the Irish Literary Theatre was founded in the small obscure Antient Concert Rooms of Dublin in 1899 Edward Martyn saw the opportunity for "an idealism founded upon the ancient genius of the land." Padraic Colum saw an idealism extracted from the modern sorrow of the land and in his plays gave vital expression to it. Whether one reads *The Fiddler's House*, *The Land* or *Thomas Muskerri*, one finds always a thesis put on some problem of Ireland. It is because Mr. Colum is so much more concerned with the situation than self-expression that so little of himself is found in the dramas as compared to his poetry. The family system, the question of the land, the revolt of the young against the fetters of environment are always the themes. There are but two ideas common to both poetry and plays and they are the wanderlust and the love of the soil.

Mr. Colum's *The Land* is described as "an agrarian comedy," but the comedy is sardonic and a sinister note runs through it. It was the purpose of the author to show the condition of modern Ireland and the characters in the play may be taken as types. The love of wandering, that great Irish trait, touched upon in all of Mr. Colum's plays, sounds a clear note and so, too, does the subtle arraignment of the family system hinted at in all the dramas. Murtagh Cosgar is a hard man, a man who has worked all his life for a home. Now that he has it under the Land acts of 1903 he is anxious to pass it on to the single son who has endured his hardness and remained by him. But the son loves Ellen and follows her to America, leaving to the dull and the weak the land so dearly bought. Even though his father's will is broken Matt Cosgar will not remain. It is the iconoclasm of youth implacably searching for idols of its own. The new generation will not be subservient to the old.

This new generation is again typified by Maire Hourican in *The Fiddler's House*. She goes back into the wandering life with her father because her strong-willed irascible lover frightens her into a realization of the impossibility of living with him. This woman of the new generation will not recognize the old system of the man-head of the family. Man and woman must meet on equal terms. Stronger than ever is sounded that second great motif of Mr. Colum in this play. The wanderlust calls to Conn Hourican, Maire's father, and he needs must crash his home down about him to be off again on the winding roads. So this play ends, too, with a departing, a breaking of old traditions.

"I'm leaving this house behind me," says Conn, "and maybe the time will come when I'll be climbing the hills and seeing the little house with tears in my eyes. I'm leaving the land behind me, too; but what's land after all against the music that comes from the far, strange places, when the night is on the ground, and the bird in the grass is quiet?"

Here we have a larger utterance, a cadenced speech bringing memories of Synge which Mr. Colum all too seldom achieves in his plays. He has trouble with his dialogue and at times it is inert, a heavy language, wingless and commonplace. Can it be that the situation engrosses him at the expense of the language?

Poetry but seldom rises to the surface in it and the few times when it does emerge shine gloriously in contrast with the rest. Least of all is there poetry in *The Land* and most of all is that play one concerned primarily with situation, and a national problem. There is poetry in *The Fiddler's House*. Many of the speeches of the fiddler seem but expressions of Mr. Colum himself. The more personally he writes the more poetical he becomes, although there is one notable exception. In *Thomas Muskerri* there is a death scene where the delicately evasive and spare hand of tragedy lifts the action to a rarified plane.

This play brings to mind certain moods of the Russian writers. It is tragedy but strangely tender tragedy. The conflict is not violent but measured. Thomas Muskerri, who for thirty years has been Master of the Workhouse, finds age upon him and his family waiting eagerly for his dismissal. Such is the irony of Fate that he dies an inmate of the place where once he ruled. The last scene of *Thomas Muskerri's* death in the pauper-bed is the best thing that Mr. Colum has done in the three plays. The book is closed in silence.

When a writer is more interested in situation, especially situations built upon national problems, than upon personal characterization, one looks for answers and remedies.