

H/10 - Empire Poetry League of Jc

SYDNEY FOWLER WRIGHT - FOUNDER OF THE EMPIRE POETRY LEAGUE

Institute of Jamaica Gold Medal Presentation Address 3. 12. 58

By J.E. Clare Mcfarlane

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Board of Governors, Ladies and Gentlemen: -

I am deeply sensible of the honour which the Board of Governors of the Institute of Jamaica has conferred on me by the award of the Institute's Gold Medal in recognition of my contribution to the literature of the West Indies. The fact that the Gold Medal has hitherto been awarded but three times in the sixty-five years since it was instituted is itself evidence of the scrupulous care that has been exercised in its bestowal and the consequent store which should be set by such recognition.

It is usual on such an occasion as this for the recipient of a medal to deliver an address on some subject which is in harmony with the aims of the Institute: the encouragement of Literature, Science and Art; and I have chosen as the subject of my address this afternoon Sydney Fowler Wright, distinguished English poet, novelist, historian, critic and editor, and founder of the Empire Poetry League, of which the Poetry League of Jamaica was a branch up to the time of the dissolution of the parent body about the year 1932. The name of Fowler Wright is remembered with honour by older members of the Poetry League of Jamaica, but is perhaps altogether unknown, outside its ranks, in this country; and appears also to be very little known in his own country despite his distinguished contribution to contemporary English Letters. There is a story to tell in connection with the apparent obscurity of a man whom many competent judges regard as one of the important literary figures of his age; and the present occasion serves well for the telling of it in so far as it is known to me.

The Empire Poetry League was founded in 1917. It was characteristic of its founder, and of his nation, that in the most critical year of World War I. there was a body of men and women who could devote themselves to such an ideal as linking together the great society of English speaking peoples throughout the world by the bond of a common poetic literature: by making common currency the best that had been stored up by past generations through the medium of the English Language and by affording access to the best that was being created in the present. It was a marvellous dream and it evoked in every part of the British Commonwealth and Empire an enthusiastic response. This wonder and this joy Jamaica was privileged to share. What joy it was to link hands with writers of Poetry in Australia, Canada, Ceylon, India, New Zealand, and the United States through 'Poetry and the Play', the official organ of the League; and to realize the fact that we were united not only by a common language but also by common spiritual ideals.

Fowler Wright was Editor of 'Poetry and the Play' and for fifteen years of the League's continuance his great scholarship and literary virtuosity were placed at the disposal of readers. His trenchant editorials and special articles, critical and informative, had much to do with the formation of the taste of those privileged to read him. He encouraged and brought to publication (at financial loss to himself in many instances) the work of Empire writers. Three volumes of an anthology of Dominion and Colonial Verse appeared between the years 1924 and 1928. In addition he issued through the medium of the Merton Press (his own creation) more than a dozen anthologies of current poetry written in Britain. There was thus a great ferment of thought and activity which was experienced throughout the whole English-speaking world, and which established the decade of the twenties as of outstanding significance in relation to the quickening of the consciousness of that world in the matter of its single destiny.

In all this Jamaica's literary aspirations found a place. We were represented in the three volumes of overseas poetry already mentioned and with the encouragement of Fowler Wright we produced our first anthology of verse: 'Voices from Summerland' in 1929.

Looking back upon the activities and enthusiasms of those years it is perhaps not difficult to see why this magnificent dream came to an abrupt end. The ship foundered upon the rock of finance. It was not enough that a comparatively small band of poetry lovers throughout the world should link hands and hearts in an attempt to establish an ideal of beauty.

This enthusiasm did not penetrate to the dense mass, growing more dense beneath the impact of economic stress and that materialism which hung like a miasmatic fog over most of the

world. We had arrived at the thirties; the decade of agnosticism and unbelief. Men were not prepared to pay hard cash for dreams!

But if the tale of the fortunes of the Empire Poetry League is marked by material failure it is nevertheless the record of a great spiritual achievement which will become more significant as the years go by. In its appeal to the whole English-speaking world nothing of the literary stature of 'Poetry and the Play' preceded it and nothing has followed it. The Editor's comments on current literary practice, his studies in contemporary English poetry and his examination and analysis of the bases of English verse constituted for the young writer a liberal education in the formation of style, and in the development of taste. His incisive wit and merciless irony, and his ruthless exposure of insincerity and humbug, were at once a mental and spiritual tonic, and a deterrent to shoddy work. From the great body of his commentaries over so long a period it is difficult to choose a few passages which will represent adequately his range and quality; but I quote a few pieces at random: Here is a sample of his critical commentary in the September-October 1923 number, p225:

In alluding to Mr. Masfield's King Cole last month I mentioned a certain line as being the worst it contained, but on a more careful reading I have corrected this opinion, and I award the prize to:

'The beauty and the truth that are our stars'.

Indeed it would have claims for consideration if we were looking for the worst line written by any reputable poet in the English tongue.

He has a genius for lines that are almost impossibly ugly, such as: -

'It was the grinning glitterer, white and wise'.

And the cause of these discords is not incompetence, but sheer indolence or perversity, for no living poet knows more that Mr. Masfield of the inexhaustible beauties and possibilities of the decasyllabic line.

But they are faults which we might forgive more easily in a meaner poet, or a meaner poem. Such lines as:-

'In the black midnight, still the cock will crow.
There is a help that the abandoned know,
Deep in the heart, that conquerors cannot feel,'

deserve less vulgar consorts.

Mr. Masfield, also, while alert and well informed concerning such things as come under his own observation, is careless to verify his more distant allusions. 'Snowy Cramoisin', for instance, is a contradiction.

It is like Tennyson's 'white samite'.

It is true that Tennyson 'lifted' these words from the Morte D'Arthur, and he may have thought that its author could be trusted to understand the dress materials of his own time, but the Morte D'Arthur, like so many of the world's greatest books, was written in prison, and Malory, when he alluded to lady's apparel, which he usually avoided, was unable to consult his wife.

In fact, cramoisin was crimson, and samite a silk of blended colours. Of course, Malory, like Bunyan, lived before prison reform had engaged the attention of the philanthropist.

He would scarcely spend his time in writing romances, if he were lodged in jail today.

In his study of the Poetry of Dr. J.D. Logan of Canada (October 1924) he writes:

The familiar question, asked by the greatest poet of the epoch which ended to the sound of Prussian artillery - 'What do they know of England who only England know?' is at least as true in the literary world as in that of politics or sociology.

It is a condition of insularity by which we in Great Britain are the greater losers.

For if a critic or a student of literature in Montreal or Melbourne be familiar with English writers, and with those of his own country also, while another in London confine his outlook to the shores of his own island, which of them will cultivate the narrower mind? Which is the more truly provincial?

It is not the least part of the work of the Empire Poetry League to break down these barriers of prejudice and insularity, and to promote a wider intercourse, and a more generous recognition of a contemporary literature, which is not of England, but of the English tongue.

For the unity of any literature is not that of a race, or a country, but of a language only. In the April-June issue of 1928 he comments on the death of Thomas Hardy as follows:-

It is only as this magazine is going to the press that the death of Thomas Hardy removes an established figure from the ranks of our living poets. He was one of that fortunate minority who live sufficiently long and are sufficiently attuned to the emotions of their own time, to secure the generous recognition of their contemporaries. He had done his work, for good or evil, and his death is not a cause for lamentation.

The high position in English poetry that he won, and deserved, will be the subject of a critical article in our next issue.

It was an infirmity of spirit rather than of character or intellect that rendered his work something less than an inspiration, but it should not be confounded with the ignobler products of decadence.

He saw the horror of war; but he never descended to the fatuous nonsense of some of the meaner spirits who wrote on the same theme. He would have been incapable of suggesting that war is inglorious because it is perilous or uncomfortable, which would be the (quite inadequate) reasons for continuing it.

He may be ultimately indited at the bar of posterity on the ground that he morbidly perceived and resented the enigma of life, and lacked faith to await its solution. But, if his soul was small, it was never base.

It is a distinction that requires emphasis, because his work, superficially considered, allies him with certain cancerous elements in contemporary verse-making, which are symptoms of a disease that must destroy our civilisation, unless we have sufficient manhood - and woman-hood - to overcome it.

War, in some aspects, may be regarded as the supreme evil, just as to wage it aggressively is the supreme crime, of humanity. But it may open a path of glorious living to the individual, precisely because of the physical discomfort, dirt, pain, disease, and death which it offers, and of the spiritual temptations which it brings.

The man who avoids war-service to escape such adventures is akin to the woman who believes (rightly or not) that childbearing would be physically detrimental, or knows that children would diminish her comforts, and avoids it in consequence. This spirit exists among us, and there are those, not content with their own baseness, who are active to spread it. It is evident in some contemporary 'poetry', though, by the inexorable law of deformity, such poems are as shapeless or repellent as the ideas that breed them.

The victory of this spirit will mean that a later century will see a reduced population in England, living not in the luxury of its dreams, but in hardship and poverty, while the 'inferior' races crowd, after disastrous and disgraceful war, into the empty fertile lands that we have claimed, but lack virility to populate.

To inoculate our youth against the poison of such propaganda is more important than a consideration either of doves or primroses, and should be the first object of English poetry today.

The gates of Westminster Abbey, which were closed to Swinburne, are flung wide for Thomas Hardy. Even in the moment of posthumous adulation, it is not probable that anyone will suggest that Hardy is the greater poet. Nor can it be said that Hardy was less antipathetic than

Swinburne to the Anglican priesthood; and in the broader issue of Christianity, Hardy was of the more infidel spirit.

The explanation of this difference may lie in the fact that Hardy's weaknesses, like those of Tennyson, were of his own time, and actually increased his popularity. Swinburne was of all time, and little influenced by the moods of his contemporaries. There was, therefore, little public protest when the honour of the Abbey was denied to the greatest poet of his age through the misplaced authority of a sulky priest.

The above quotation illustrates the breadth of outlook which the Editor brings to passing topics of literary interest.

The following Editorial comment which appeared in the Autumn 1929 issue of 'Poetry and the Play' could be read with profit by many practitioners of verse today:-

"Among our American friends who think, (as do so many in England also), that poetry can be originated by a revision of technical rules, there is a disposition to condemn 'inversion' unconditionally, in any form.

A needless or pointless inversion is bad art, and has always been so. Like all forms of 'poetic licence', it must be its own justification. There are few things more deadening than a stale convention, - except the tyranny of one which is living. Let us look at all such questions freshly, with minds that are alert and unprejudiced, but the principles of an art do not change with its conventions, and if we be justified today in condemning the work of a contemporary poet because he makes use of inversion, without consideration of its results, or of the other qualities of his verse, then we must consistently disparage the earlier poetry in which similar inversions occur.

Poetry has sufficient licence to break any rule of grammar, or to transgress fact, if it can reach its end by such a road."

As to transgression of fact, two illustrations may be taken from the poetry of an earlier century. When Campbell wrote:-

'Where Blake and mighty Nelson fell',

He ignored the fact that Blake did not fall in action at all. He died of scurvy and other complicating diseases when in Plymouth Sound, on his way home, invalid from Cadiz.

But that is a mere fact; incidental only. Blake was Blake; and his name is linked with that of Nelson in an imagination which is vitally true.

A contemporary of Campbell wrote a sea-song which had some popular qualities, in which the lines occur:-

'Away the good ship flies, and leaves
Old England on the lee,'

Which condemn themselves, because they are ignorant nonsense. Cunningham did not know the meaning of the word 'lee', nor had his imagination sufficient vitality to avoid the use of words which conveyed no clear impression to his own mind.

No sailing-ship ever flew away from any 'lee', nor ever will, because the 'lee' is the side toward which the wind moves.

This was bad art yesterday, as it would be today, or tomorrow.

No word or phrase should be used which does not express a clear picture, or a clear thought, and the use of which for that end is not deliberate choice in the writer's mind. To ignore this rule is to work with blunt tools: it is the explanation why so much verse, old and new, leaves no clear or deep impression upon a reader's mind. The author may (or may not) have had a distinct vision, but he was content to state it in a vague blur of words.

And finally I quote from the Editorial article of the 1930 Summer number the following which challenges the authenticity of much that passes for modernistic poetry:-

"I once suggested that the 'modernists' who profess to believe that 'traditional' verse was inferior to their own productions would be more convincing if they would demonstrate their capacity in the style they despise by a few elementary exercises, such as a sonnet - a mere trifle - which would be something better than 'When I consider how my light is spent', or 'The World is too much with us', which those of us who cannot reach to higher things still think rather good. Or a fifty-stanza poem in the style of 'Adonais', but of better quality, would be equally convincing, without being a severe test.

After that, when we were told that unintelligible gibberish is a higher form of art, we might still be slow to understand, but we should be equally so to contradict.

I have also reminded them that so called 'free verse' is not new, but that it was written supremely well in the middle ages; and in Early Victorian times by Martin F. Tupper, at least as well as it is done today.

Now I have come upon a poem by Martin Tupper, in Sharpe's London Magazine February 1849, which shows that he had the courage to challenge the test. It is called 'My Own Place', and is too long to quote fully, but as it may not be readily accessible to most readers I will give the last stanza.

'I will not, I dare not, I cannot, I stand
Where God has ordained me to be,
An honest mechanic, - or lord in the land -
He fitted my calling for me:
Whatever my state, be it weak, be it strong
With honour, or sweat, on my face,
This, this, is my glory, my strength, and my song,
I stand, like a star, in my place.'

Frankly, I don't think much of it. It seems to me to be nonsense, astronomically and otherwise: and I don't admire the chosen rhythm.

Yet if I am any judge of free verse, Martin Tupper could write it better than (or, rather, not so badly as) D.H. Lawrence, who is almost equally admired today.

Therefore, if I am right, it should be expected that the later poet's 'Traditional' verse should be on a lower scale of technical achievement.

What do we find? Here is a couplet from a just-published poem: Flapper Vote: -

'So be a nice uncle, be good to us girls;
Just vote us some pin-money to encourage our curls!'

Clever, isn't it? If not quite up to the music-hall standard, it isn't far below... And yet, if we must make comparisons, I think Tupper comes out top, all along the line... But when everyone is busy telling everyone else that Lawrence was a great genius, there are many who prefer a quiet smile to the assertion of an unpopular truth.

The great tradition of poetry, so far as I know, has never had a more redoubtable champion.

SYDNEY FOWLER WRIGHT

Fowler Wright's work as Editor and compiler, prodigious though it was, constituted but the fringe of his literary activities. Under the pen-name of Sydney Fowler he produced numerous detective tales which were calculated to 'keep the pot boiling' while he gave himself with more deliberation to serious work. Under his full name he has produced more than twenty works of fiction, two tracts of political significance and a biography of Sir Walter Scott. All of his novels which I have read reveal a more than usually active imagination, superimposed upon a broad common sense which, like that of H.G. Wells, can grapple convincingly with the problems that beset the life of ordinary humanity. In 'The World Below' which could be termed a fantasy, but for the fact that it is

sober in style and logical in thought, he experiments with time and speculates as to the change in consciousness it might bring to what are today called the lower mammals. In the course of half a million years they have arrived at a level of intelligence equal to that of man, and the mental intercourse between such a being and a man of today, for whom time has somehow stood still, makes an intriguing study.

Of a different quality is 'Deluge' and its sequel, 'Dawn', which deals with some of the perplexing social problems which beset modern life and which remain half submerged beneath our social conscience until some catastrophe lays them bare in all their stark reality, and men are compelled to come to terms with their primal instincts. The social dilemmas of 'Deluge' and 'Dawn' are precipitated by a great physical catastrophe that overtakes the continent of Europe in which much of its land mass disappears beneath the sea.

It may well be that the author's inner vision presaged a spiritual and not a physical disaster. There is a great deal of the prophet in Fowler Wright. 'Deluge' and its sequel were written somewhere about 1928 when the Second World War was eleven years away...

Briefly the story these books tell is as follows: One of the cataclysmic upheavals of Nature which may be surmised from geological evidence but not experienced in historical times has overtaken Europe, including Britain, large masses of land have disappeared, and death and confusion have separated members of families. Out of this holocaust emerges a man who has lost touch with his wife; and after a desperate and fruitless search gives her up as dead. Life is reduced to the primitive and becomes little more than a struggle for survival. After a lapse of time he meets a woman - Dawn - a different type from his lost wife, Helen, but possessing qualities which attract him, and eventually he marries her.

Long after he had settled down to this new life, Helen, his first wife turns up. She had miraculously escaped. Her husband faced with what would have been an insoluble dilemma under the present social practice of our Western civilisation, had little difficulty in coming to a decision under conditions which allowed his primal instincts full play: he kept both wives. And the women's attitude is summed up in the statement addressed to Helen by Dawn: 'there is no *first* between us'.

The books proved a popular success. 'Deluge' attracted the attention of one of the Book Societies and sold one hundred thousand copies in its first edition.

Fowler Wright's independence of mind reveals itself in other ways, in his attitude toward the conventions of book publishing. He could see no reason why publishers should appropriate most of the financial returns accruing from a successful book: and so he undertook his own publishing. (In this he resembles Sir Walter Scott whose biography he undertook partly in vindication of that master's probity in financial matters. Fowler Wright is himself an accountant and eminently fitted to treat of Scott's publishing ventures from the financial angle).

His attitude toward publishing, and perhaps, particularly, his success with 'Deluge', provoked the active animosity of established publishers; and there is little doubt that their opposition played a decisive part in bringing about some years later the financial failure of the movement he had founded.

In 'Prelude in Prague' Fowler Wright prophesied how the Second World War would commence, and where; and he was right in all essential details. He foresaw that the first care of the German Power would be to get hold of the great Skoda Works of Czechoslovakia which would assure the rapid re-armament of Germany.

'Elfwyn' is the last of his novels which I have read. I possessed the book for many years before I came to read it. I knew it was a story about ancient Britain, treating of the time when England was divided into seven Kingdoms, and was fighting for her life against the predatory Danes, and with herself, to achieve nationhood; but somehow I felt no great urge to read the book. I had, however, underrated Fowler Wright's resources if I thought that a tale of those far-off times would be tedious and boring to our modern taste in fiction. When I came to read the book I found that our author had once again demonstrated his remarkable versatility and had brought home to our sympathies the loves and intrigues of men and women, far removed in time, but, underneath their strange manners and stranger circumstances, of like passions as ourselves.

But we have yet to consider the cream of Fowler Wright's literary work which is his poetry. His verse translation of Dante's 'Divine Comedy' has been adjudged far superior to Carey's which,

up to the time of the appearance of Fowler Wright's, was the only English version. His treatment of Malory's Tales of the Round Table were considered by the critics a more faithful representation of the original than Tennyson's which imported into the ancient tales the moralities of Victorian England.

Fowler Wright has presented Dante's great epic, written (the wonder of it!) in terza rima, in loose decasyllabic rhymed verses with such skill and poetic power as to invest his translation with the qualities of an original work.

In an informative preface to 'The Inferno' he sets out the reasoning by which he arrived at the standards he followed in translation; and the result has vindicated his judgement. Here is a passage from 'The Inferno' describing a scene in Hell; not by any means the lowest Hell; here was a hell made up of opportunists; of the type that support a good or evil course according as their personal interest or profit warrants:

"Sighs, and wailings loud,
Outcries perpetual of recruited pain,
Sounds of strange tongues, and angers that remain
Vengeless for ever, the thick and clamorous crowd
Of discords pressed, that needs I wept to hear,
First hearing. There, with reach of hands anear,
And voices passion-hoarse, or shrilled with fright,
The tumult of the everlasting night,
As sand that dances in continual wind,
Turns on itself for ever.

And I, my head
Begirt with movements, and my ears bedinned
With outcries round me, to my leader said,
'Master, whot hear I? Who so overborne
With woes are these?'"

He answered, 'These by they
That praiseless lived and blameless. Now the scorn
Of Height and Depth alike, abortions drear,
Cast with those abject angels whose delay
To join rebellion, or their Lord defend,
Waiting their proved advantage, flung them here.
Chased forth from Heaven, lest else its beauties end
The pure perfection of their stainless claim,
Out-herded from the shining gate they came,
Where the deep hells refused them, lest the lost
Boast something baser than themselves".

This book is a boon to the English reader unable to read the Italian of Dante. As the author points out, it is seldom possible to reproduce the verbal felicities of one language in another; but by allowing himself a free paraphrase of the original the translator is able to introduce felicities native to the English tongue, and to invest the translation with the qualities of an original poem.

'The Inferno' was published serially in 'Poetry and the Play' for some years and appeared in book form in 1928. 'The Purgatorio' was also published serially; but as far as I am aware neither the 'Purgatorio' nor the 'Paradiso' has yet appeared in book form, perhaps owing to the refusal of the translator to hand it over to a publisher.

Fowler Wright, himself, considered his lyric poetry to be the chief glory of his work. In 1925 appeared his metrical version of 'The Song of Songs', 'Some Songs of Bilitis' and 'The Songs of Baluchistan' in one volume. The volume was dedicated to the memory of his first wife; and from the dedication we learn that much, or all, of his earlier lyric poetry was buried with her:

'Is ashes all the verse I made
The verse for only you.
Retrieveless, save the years return
The years that proved it true.'

From 1925 he looked backward across the decade that had passed since the commencement of World War I.

'More deep the living sights we saw
The dying days conceal.....'

And noted with a touch of sadness the changes that had come about in the fortunes of Britain, and the uncertain out-look for the future:

'More dark around the land you loved
The clouds of winter close:
Amid surrendered seas we steer
To rocks that no man knows.'

And then follow these beautiful and high hearted verses:-

'I see not from what separate ways
In other dawns we meet,
Nor how shall He whose thought we are
His broken tale complete;

But spring has found your daffodils
With gallant hearts and high,
That like in your birth-month are born
And like in April die.

And till this dark earth's mystery
Its hidden end fulfils
The ring is on your hand, and on
Your heart the daffodils.'

This dedicatory poem in its simple and effective beauty gives us a fore-taste of what follows. One should read Fowler Wright's version of the 'Song of Songs' with the original beside him. He will then have an appreciation of the way in which the modern poet's imagination plays upon that ancient masterpiece, underscoring its high poetic qualities and throwing light upon dark and cryptic passages. I was particularly delighted with his rendering of the following:

'Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah,
Comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.

My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one
of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her;
The daughters saw her and blessed her; yea,
the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair
as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an
army with banners?

I went down into the garden of nuts to see the
fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine
flourished and the pomegranates budded.

Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the
Chariots of Aminnadib.

Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that
we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the
Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.'

There is perhaps no passage in all poetry that describes more effectively the mysterious
power of womankind: 'Terrible as an army with banners'!

But Fowler Wright in his paraphrase gives point to the imagery of the thirteenth verse:-

"What will ye see in the Shulamite?
As it were the company of two armies."

He says:-

"The night is breathless where she comes. The day
Of all her light is full.
She is two armies in their joined array,
And both invincible."

Here is his rendering of the passage quoted from Solomon's Song:-

"Return, return, thy peasant dress forget,
Return, O Shulamite!
Then shall we see as whom from Gilead met
The shining Sons of Light.

I heard the queens, among themselves who spake,
"Behold, the moon is bare;
The blue night pauses, lest a cloud should flake
A visioned sight so fair."

I heard the virgins of Jerusalem,
Among themselves who said,
"Behold, she is the dawn on Bethlehem,
When the cold night is fled."

I heard the voices of the concubines,
When that clear sun they saw,
"Behold, the lightning of her eyes outshines
The thousand blades of war."

The night is breathless where she comes. The day
Of all her light is full.
She is two armies in their joined array,
And both invincible."

In 'Some Songs of Bilitis' and the 'Songs of Baluchistan' we come to the personal lyrics
which may (or may not) reveal something of the poet's inner life and thought. Here thought and

feeling are expressed with an economy of word which gives the effect of great power. The subjects are varied but in the main they reveal great emotional stress in a variety of human circumstances. This is especially true of the 'Songs of Bilitis'; and here is No. 13 of that series which reveals a very old and human situation:

"O sombre woods, reveal if here she came.

O sombre woods, reveal if here she came.

She sought the vale below.

O vale, I call again my mistress' name.

The river trail ye know.

O river, tell me, did she wander here?

By the great road she goes.

O road, reveal. Thy barren course is clear.

The city street she chose.

O happy street, that felt her naked tread,

She took the golden way.

O way, what closes all the space ahead?

The palace gates are they.

O palace yield her whom I seek so far.

Beneath her breasts are bound

Pearls and great gems, for honour's fallen star

Herself thou hast not found."

I said these lyrics may, or may not, express something of the poet's inner life. He is a man of middle height with a humorous mouth and a calmness of manner and movement that belies his tremendous energy. There is no exterior indication of that love of adventure which we know from his writings to be a marked feature of his character. He is forthright in his editorial writings; and it is not difficult to glean from them where he stands with regard to a variety of subjects. From his fiction one may gather something of his views on religion or ethics or politics; but his lyric poetry flows through a region of mysterious depth and silence.

We feel instinctively that here beneath that depth and that silence is the essential man; here is the place of dreams, large dreams that would embrace all mankind, which is a field for the spirits adventuring. If there is a single poem of his which could be said to sum his attitude to life it is perhaps to be found in the following from 'Some Songs of Bilitis':-

"I sing not loves long ceased".

I sing not loves long ceased, and lost within

The cold receding sea.

What are the Paphian's woes, or Byblis' sin,

Or Helen's arms to me?

What thirst of life was theirs, what hope, what fear,

But in me beats today?

I spoil or lose, I reach or hunger here,

And sterile shades are they.

In me, in me, the exultant pulses stir,

As here supine I lie.

It is my life I sing. Shall life recur?

Shall the great darkness die?

But when no more my veins their strength renew,
When the last road I go,
Be then no cup I have not lifted too,
No draught I did not know."

End