

**DRAMATIC STORIES
FOR READING AND
ACTING, PP. 1-222**

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Dramatic Stories for Reading and Acting, pp. 1-222 by Ada Maria Skinner

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DRAMATIC STORIES FOR READING AND ACTING.

N. P. 1

Go, little book, and wish to all,
Flowers in the garden, meat in the hall,
A living river by the door,
A nightingale in the sycamore.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

INTRODUCTION

LEARNING to read is more than learning to recognize and pronounce printed words. Reading in a listless manner is a dull and unprofitable exercise. In teaching children to read, the good primary teacher seeks, therefore, by furnishing an incentive through interesting material, and by stimulating intelligent and reasoned activity, to prevent discouragement and to banish *ennui*. Hence the value of selections that are dramatic in quality, and, to some extent, dramatic in form; for they encourage the children to read as if they were participants in the action of the story. Such material satisfies the child's love of action, stimulates his imagination, and, by keeping his faculties alert, helps him to read with understanding and with intelligent inflection. Thus the gap between the spoken language of his daily life and the printed language of the page is bridged over, and reading becomes to him a real way of acquiring and conveying ideas.

Like many other good modern ideas in education, the dramatic work in the schools has often been carried to a ridiculous excess. Dramatization presupposes a certain emphasis, a certain heightening of effects. But the school is not a training-ground for

the stage; and the dramatic exaggeration in good reading should fall below that of the stage, and even below the more exciting passages in real life. Good reading *suggests* the action and the emotion; it does not mimic or reproduce them. It does not call for shouting, for fierce gesticulation, for violent action; if it avoids, on the one hand, dull and lifeless monotonies, it also avoids, on the other hand, all boisterousness and affectation. In short, the school is not the place for melodrama or for the abandonment of those restraints that indicate good breeding. Such excesses do not educate.

The stories in the present volume are admirably chosen and admirably told. They are classics, by virtue of their place either in well-known folklore or in the books that all educated people know. They are dramatic in quality because they are full of action, because the action is steadily developed in the dialogue, and because the dialogue leads up to a climactic situation that is interesting in itself. Whether acted or merely read — and it is properly within the author's plan that they may be handled in either way — the dramatic quality of these stories will make itself felt. They are free from the driveling emptiness and meaningless conversation that leads nowhither; and they are equally free from the bad taste of stridency and bombast.

FRANKLIN T. BAKER.

TEACHERS COLLEGE,
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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