

**THE REALM OF
POETRY: AN
INTRODUCTION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649687114

The Realm of Poetry: An Introduction by Stephen J. Brown

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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BY
STEPHEN J. BROWN S.J.

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1922

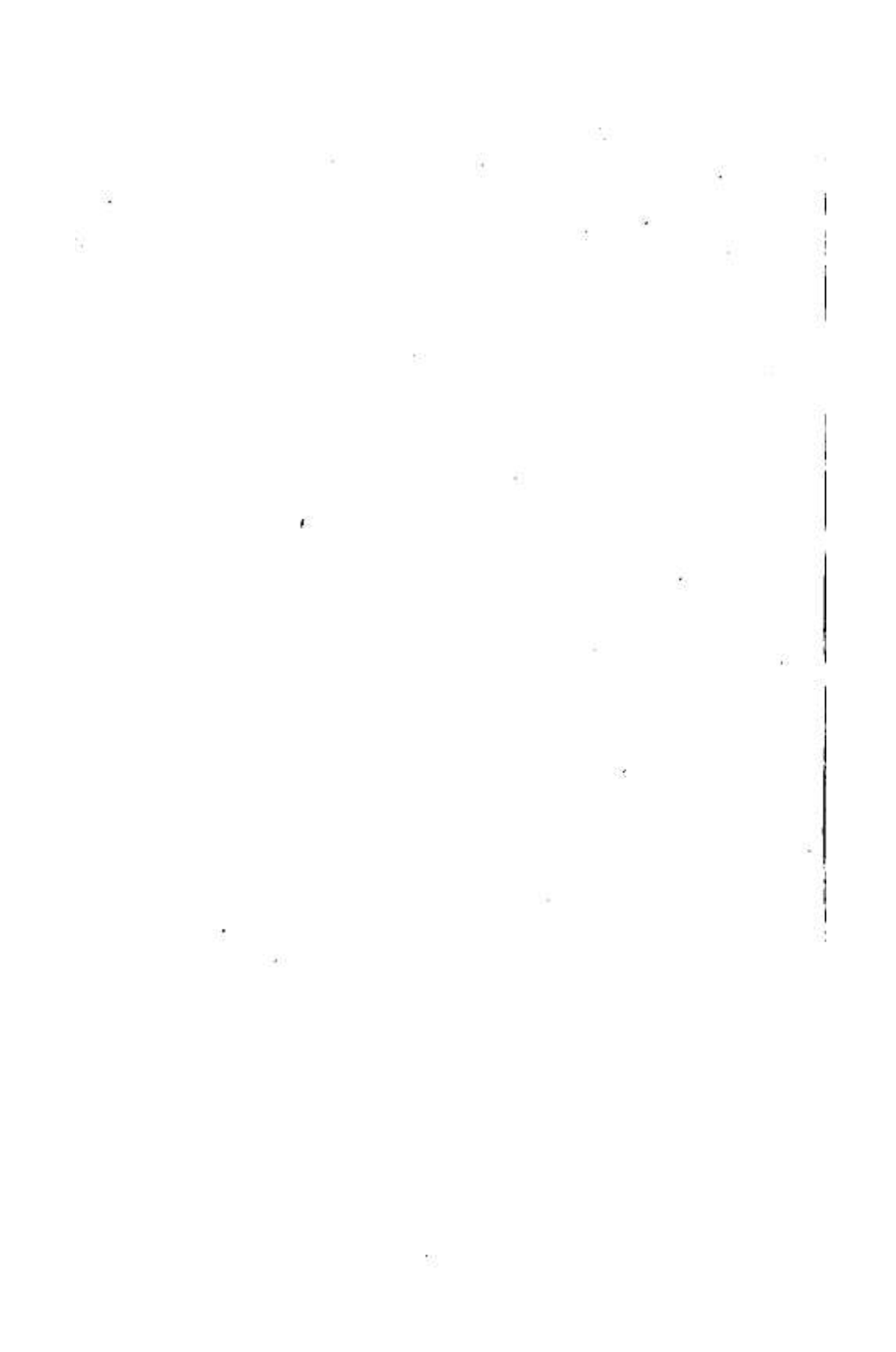
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TO
MY FATHER
WHO FIRST LED ME
INTO THE REALM OF POETRY
THIS EFFORT TO GUIDE OTHERS INTO IT
IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED



TO THE READER

THIS little book does not aspire to be a learned treatise on the history of poetry or on the science of poetics, such as the Saintsburys and Bradleys and Gummeres have given us. Nor, on the other hand, is it a school manual, containing all that is useful for the passing of examinations. It was written in the hope of making its readers sharers in an experience which has been for the writer, as for countless other men, a source of unfeigned delight. Were I writing about flowers I might make a contribution to natural science, or compile a useful manual of botany for the class-room, or write a book meant simply to impart a joy. In a sense it is this last kind of book that I have tried to write about poetry.

I say 'in a sense,' for a book about the appreciation of poetry must needs differ widely from a book about the love of flowers, and that for the good reason that poetry's appeal is to other and higher faculties than can be reached by the shapes and colours of flowers. If a book about the appreciation of poetry is to achieve its aim it must justify poetry to these higher faculties. Appreciation must grow out of knowledge and understanding. One does not learn to love and admire poetry

by dint of being told how admirable and lovable a thing it is. One will not come to appreciate poetry merely from having listened to its praises.

Accordingly in this little book I have tried to do something more than sing the praises of poetry. I have attempted, in fact, to combine within its narrow compass three things not usually, I think, to be found together in books about poetry.

In Part One I endeavour to give such a notion of the nature and inner meaning of poetry as could be conveyed without recourse to the technical language of literary criticism or the abstruser notions of philosophy. Such an endeavour, if any measure of success has been attained, may, I think, justify itself by the consideration, already spoken of, that true appreciation must arise out of understanding. And here let me say that though I should be glad that this book should lead to a love of poetry in general, it will fulfil all its purpose only if it help toward appreciation of the *best* poetry. Not that I can hope to furnish the reader with a ready-made standard for the gauging of values. Possibly no such standard is discoverable. But it is not too much to hope that the reader is here furnished with helps and means toward the discovering and using of his own judgment—his best judgment, which is perhaps the only standard that is of great practical value to the ordinary man. At all events, the discovery and use of such a standard will free him from slavery to the critics and the *littérateurs*. Why should one bow down before