CANONS OF CRITICISM: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH POETRY, PP. 1-94

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By C. W. Macfarlane.

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Preface.

OME years ago we attempted to sketch "The Development of English Poetry," but at the very outset found ourselves confronted with this formidable difficulty, that there is no generally accepted definition of Poetry. While there is undoubtedly some agreement as to the merit of special lines, and many attempts to define Poetry or to formulate a criterion by which all lines might be safely judged, yet are these conflicting in the extreme, while none seem willing to give a reason for the faith that is in them. Until this is done, until some general agreement has been established among men in regard to a criterion which shall say; this is of low, and this of high degree, no discussion of "The Development of English Poetry" can be with any great profit.

Recognizing this, we have endeavored to find some strand of agreement running through the mass of conflicting opinion. Where one has seemed arrayed against another, we have striven, not so much to develop a new and different truth, as to harmonize their contradiction, holding it as highly probable that they were but different phases of the same truth.

Out of the original discussion there have grown definitions of many of the terms in current use in criticism, and yet about which much difference of opinion exists. Lastly we were constrained to define Humor, and this widening of the discussion has compelled the scemingly pretentious title "Canons of Criticism;" and yet that the principles here enunciated have a wider application than to Poetry, he who runs may read.

That the time has come when, if Critical Literature is to make further advance, there must be some general agreement as to the meaning of the terms employed, there can be no question, though how successful we have

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