

**ESSENTIALS OF
POETRY: LOWELL
LECTURES, 1911**

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Essentials of Poetry: Lowell Lectures, 1911 by William Allan Neilson

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WILLIAM ALLAN NEILSON

**ESSENTIALS OF
POETRY: LOWELL
LECTURES, 1911**

THE TYPES OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ESSENTIALS OF POETRY

Lowell Lectures, 1911

BY

WILLIAM ALLAN NEILSON

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY



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TO MY MOST SEVERE CRITIC

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PREFACE

THE point of view maintained in the present volume was reached in the course of discussions with a class of students of English literature in Harvard University. Much of whatever value the ideas here presented may possess is due to the questions and criticisms offered by members of the class, and by a few friends to whom they have been submitted. The form in which they now appear is practically that in which they were delivered as lectures at the Lowell Institute in the spring of 1911. I have taken some pains to remove the more obvious traces of oral delivery, but I fear that it has not been possible to disguise altogether the didactic tone due to their academic origin.

The problem of the essential nature of poetry may be approached from many directions, and I wish to make it clear that I realize that from other angles other analyses may be made with an equal claim to validity. The choice of the present angle was determined largely by the desire to arrive at some clear and consistent conception of the essence of Romanticism. In some of the most vigorous

critical writing of the day there appears a tendency to charge this phase of art with the whole burden of modern artistic sins, and it has seemed to me that in this attack there was evident a serious lack of discrimination among the various elements roughly grouped under the term. In attempting to separate these elements and to decide which of them could be regarded as really Romantic in any coherent sense of the word, I found it necessary to come to an understanding also with respect to such terms as Classic, Realistic, and Sentimental; and the conclusion of the investigation yielded the view of the constituents of poetry which this volume presents. I am not without hope that some contribution has been made towards that freeing of terminology from ambiguity which is so necessary for the further progress of literary criticism.

BUCHENBERG IM SCHWARZWALD,
August, 1911.