

GRADED POETRY

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Graded Poetry by Katherine D. Blake & Georgia Alexander

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KATHERINE D. BLAKE & GEORGIA ALEXANDER

GRADED POETRY

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EIGHTH YEAR

EDITED BY

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INTRODUCTION

POETRY is the chosen language of childhood and youth. The baby repeats words again and again for the mere joy of their sound : the melody of nursery rhymes gives a delight which is quite independent of the meaning of the words. Not until youth approaches maturity is there an equal pleasure in the rounded periods of elegant prose. It is in childhood therefore that the young mind should be stored with poems whose rhythm will be a present delight and whose beautiful thoughts will not lose their charm in later years.

The selections for the lowest grades are addressed primarily to the feeling for verbal beauty, the recognition of which in the mind of the child is fundamental to the plan of this work. The editors have felt that the inclusion of critical notes in these little books intended for elementary school children would be not only superfluous, but, in the degree in which critical comment drew the child's attention from the text, subversive of the desired result. Nor are there any notes on methods. The best way to teach children to love a poem is to read it inspiringly to them. The French say : "The ear is the pathway to the heart." A poem should be so read that it will sing itself in the hearts of the listening children.

In the brief biographies appended to the later books the human element has been brought out. An effort has been made to call attention to the education of the poet and his equipment for his life work rather than to the literary qualities of his style.

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EIGHTH YEAR — FIRST HALF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

ENGLAND, 1340-1400

"The First Virtue"

The first virtue, sone, if thou wilt learn
Is to restraine and keepen well thy tongue.

Loke who that is most virtuous alway,
Prive and apart, and most intendeth ay
To do the gentil dedes that he can,
And take him for the gretest gentilman.

5

EDMUND SPENSER

ENGLAND, 1552-1590

Ay me! how many perils doe enfold
The righteous man, to make him daily fall.

Who will not mercie unto others show,
How can he mercie ever hope to have?

10

I was promised on a time
To have reason for my rhyme;
From that time unto this season
I received nor rhyme nor reason.