

**THE PEARL; A MIDDLE
ENGLISH POEM. EDITED
WITH INTRODUCTION,
NOTES AND GLOSSARY**

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The pearl; a middle English poem. Edited with introduction, notes and glossary by Charles G. Osgood

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CHARLES G. OSGOOD

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The Belles-Lettres Series

SECTION II

MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE

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THE PEARL

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A MIDDLE ENGLISH POEM

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION,
NOTES, AND GLOSSARY

BY

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BOSTON, U.S.A., AND LONDON

D. C. HEATH & CO., PUBLISHERS

TO MY FRIEND
FRANCIS PHELPS DODGE

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

Preface

IN its external loveliness, and even more in its deeper spiritual beauty and truth, lies sufficient reason for most patient and devoted study of *The Pearl*; yet the poem has hitherto found little fame or real appreciation. This is easily accounted for by the remoteness of its dialect, the obscurity of its language and literary relations, and its somewhat unworldly, and at present uncongenial, content. Two editions only have appeared — the first being little more than a diplomatic reproduction of the manuscript, and the second incomplete in apparatus; both are expensive, and not in common circulation.

My object has therefore been twofold — to bring the poem to a greater number of readers, and to furnish it with such setting and explanation as may help to release its pure and noble influences as a work of art. To this end distinctions of meaning in the glossary are more elaborate than is usually necessary in the study of a Middle English text; and many citations are made in the notes as part'al evidence that the poem is not an isolated creation, but is closely allied, both through its general characteristics and many details, with the literature of various kinds under whose inspiration it was written.

The text I have derived from the manuscript through photographs of it made for me at the British Museum. I have thus been able to correct errors of detail in both previous editions, and to pass judgment upon Fick's notes on the text and the manuscript. Certain difficulties, however, still remain, which I hope may engage skill greater than mine, and thus in due time be cleared away. For the sake

of accessibility I have deposited photographic facsimiles of the manuscript in the library at Princeton and at Yale.

I have taken the liberty to change the title commonly given to the longer homiletic poem of our author. *Clan-ness* is awkward, and sorts ill with the modernized titles given to the other works of the poet. *Cleanness* in its modern sense does not render the poet's word *clan-ness*, and is too narrow and prosaic. Since the titles are, in any case, only those given by modern editors, I have adopted the title *Purity*, as being in all respects more accurate and appropriate.

It remains to express my gratitude to Professor Albert S. Cook, not only for reading much of the proof, but for his friendly interest and counsel during the progress of the work. I am indebted also to Professor Flügel for his helpful criticism and suggestions; and to the Rev. H. M. Bannister for most useful advice in certain difficulties of transcribing the text.

C. G. O., JR.

Princeton University, January 26, 1906.