

"When the twentieth century opened" writes A.C. Ward, "Tennyson had been dead nine years, and there was a wide spread impression that English poetry had died with him." To the critics of the early 20th century it seemed that the glorious days of the English poetic muse were over and what was to follow was going to be puerile, wayward, and obscure. A.C. Ward came out with the remark, "The poetry of the period shows a distinct decline, not in the general level of execution but in genius and breadth of range." The apprehensions of the critics of modern poetry were rather misplaced, and modern poetry has to give a rich harvest of poetic thought in a style and diction peculiar to the age. The fact is that in the modern age there "has been no death of great poets or great poems that will stand the test of time and become a part of the imperishable literary heritage of England."

astounding Variety of Themes in modern poetry

Poetry today can be written on almost any subject. The modern poet finds inspiration from railway trains, tramcars, telephone, the snake charmer and things of common place interest. Modern poets have not accepted the theory of great subjects for poetic composition. The whole

Universe is the modern poet's experience. He writes on themes of real life and also makes excursion in the world of religion, mysticism and fairyland. We have a wide variety of poems such as *The Song of Train* by John Davidson, *Goods Train at Night* by Kenneth Ashley, *The Charcoal Burner* by Edmund Gosse, *Machine Gums* by Richard Aldington, *Seekers* by Crasfield and *Listeners* by Walter de la Mare.

In their moods also, modern poets are varied and do not belong to a single recognizable group. "Mr. Bridges is the poet of nine o'clock in the morning, Mr. Hardy of midnight. The truth is there has never been a greater variety of moods among poets than during the past two generations."

Humanitarian and Democratic Note in Modern Poetry

Modern poetry is marked with a note of humanitarianism and democratic feeling. The modern poet, more than Wordsworth, are fine lyrics of love. W.B. Yeats's *When You are Old* is a fine poem of love. Arthur Symon's *The Broken Tryst* deals with disappointment in love. The lover feels despair because the 'tryst' is broken.

"And then a woman passed. The hour
Rang heavily along the air
I have no hope, I had no power
To think for thought was but despair"

John Masefield finds a feeling of dejection in love. The beauty of the beloved reminds him at once of the decay of physical charms. His mind never seems to forget that:

"Death has a lodge in lips as red as cherry
Death has mansion in the yew tree berries.

Nature in Modern Poetry :-

Nature captivates the modern poet no less than the poets of the earlier ages. But the modern poet of nature is not a mystic. He does not find any spiritual meaning in Nature. He is elated and exalted at the sight of nature's loveliness. He gives an exquisite picture of birds, clouds, landscape, sea and the countryside in his poetry. Masefield, Robert Bridges, Edmund Blunden are the great poets of Nature in modern poetry.

Complexity and Psychology in Modern Poetry

Some modern poets are interested in delving deep in to the recesses of the subconscious mind. Some of the poems of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound are difficult to follow because of their psychological complexity and difficult imagery. This complexity in modern poetry has been accentuated by the New Metaphysicals like T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, C.D. Lewis and Louis MacNeice. These new metaphysicals "were often as crabbed and tortuous in expression as the least luminous of their long ago predecessors such as Donne."

Longingness in Modern Poetry

Longingness is at the root of all poetry whether ancient or modern. Modern poets express longingness of all kinds in their poetry. W.B. Yeats' *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* is the yearning of a homesick heart translated in to the music of his dreams. Robert Brooke's *Old Vicarage, Grantchester* is not merely a wall, it is a cry of homesickness. John Crasfield's *Seekers* is the best example of the longing of man for God and the eternal City of light.

Diction and Style of Modern Poetry

Modern poets have a preference for simple and direct expression. Old archaic words and usages are no longer in vogue. What guides the modern poet in his selection of words is expressiveness. Words are chosen for their association and only those words are employed which convey the meaning.

Modern poets have chosen to be free in the use of metre. They have followed *Verse Libre*, i.e. freedom from trammels of verse. They have made experiments in versification. Verse rhythm is replaced by prose rhythm. There is free verse movement in modern poetry.

The poets of to-day are sincere in their vocation. There is the stamp of honesty in modern poetry. "The poetry of the 20th century is less vague, less verbose, less eloquent than most poetry of the Victorian period. It has set before itself an ideal of absolute simplicity and sincerity —

an ideal which implies an individual and unsteretyped diction and an individual and unsteretyped rhythms.

Poetry is a criticism of life. It must maintain its contact with life. It is realistic in tone and expresses the spirit of the age. It cannot be demounced as petty, wayward and puerile. It can safely take its place of pride in the kingdom of poetry produced from the times of Chaucer to the modern times.

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