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William J. Long and His Literature

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ABSTRACT: William Joseph Long (3 April 1867^[1] – 1952) was an American writer, naturalist and minister. He lived and worked in Stamford, Connecticut as a minister of the First Congregationalist Church.

As a naturalist, he would leave Stamford every March, often with his son, Brian, and two daughters, Lois and Cesca, to travel to "the wilderness" of Maine. There they would stay until the first snows of October, although sometimes he would stay all winter. In the 1920s, he began spending his summers in Nova Scotia, claiming "the wilderness is getting too crowded".

He wrote of these wilderness experiences in the books *Ways of Wood Folk*, *Wilderness Ways*, *Wood-folk Comedies*, *Northern Trails*, *Wood Folk at School*, and many others. His earlier books were illustrated by Charles Copeland; two later ones were illustrated by Charles Livingston Bull. Long believed that the best way to experience the wild was to "plant yourself and sit for hours on end to let the wild come to you; and they will!"

KEYWORDS- William Joseph Long , books, wilderness, American, minister

I.INTRODUCTION

Rev. Long's books found a large audience and were even issued in schools under the title of *The Wood Folk Series*. However, his findings and observations clashed with the prevailing scientific wisdom of animal behavior, which believed animals behaved purely on instinct, and could not learn from experience: a bird builds a nest purely by instinct and is not taught the skills required. Rev. Long provided many examples, supposedly from his experience, to cast doubt on that prevailing wisdom, suggesting that in fact animals did learn, and each could become individuals within their species. Some of the more famous observations were that kingfishers would catch fish in a river and then drop them into small pools so their offspring could practice catching the same fish but in an easier environment. He also chronicled a woodcock that made a "splint" for its broken leg. He also wrote of foxes that rode on the backs of sheep to escape hunters and porcupines curling into balls and rolling down hills.

All this led to a belief that Rev. Long (and others) were anthropomorphizing animal behavior, blurring the lines between the animal world and humans. This came to a head when President Teddy Roosevelt's naturalist adviser, John Burroughs, accused Rev. Long (and others) of gross exaggeration, if not outright lies, regarding his books and the reflections of nature therein. Roosevelt wrote "If he stated that he had seen a weasel kill a deer and then carry it to the top of a pine tree, I would not care how many affidavits he produced, because the feat would be mechanically impossible." Long thus found himself at the center of the nature fakers controversy of the early 1900s. Ultimately Burroughs claimed Rev. Long was trying to sell books to gullible readers with such lies and President Theodore Roosevelt himself had Rev. Long's books taken from all school libraries.

The local Stamford paper chronicled the feud with "our dashing Rev. Long". Rev. Long would counter that you cannot "understand nature when you have a gun on your hip, ride on top of a wagon or horseback, and have a crowd of twenty with you," taking aim at Teddy Roosevelt's much publicized and photographed forays into nature. He went so far to state Roosevelt "never met an animal he didn't kill." After a couple months back and forth in the Stamford and national papers, Rev. Long said that "while obviously we cannot settle this through the media, I invite President Roosevelt anytime to Stamford to settle this like men." Roosevelt never accepted his invitation.

Historian Ralph H. Lutts has argued that Long was "an experienced woodsman and close observer of nature" who did not intentionally fabricate his observations but sometimes misinterpreted what he saw.^[2] Long rejected Darwinism and the idea of struggle for existence. He believed that all animal minds were reflections of God and relied on empathy to understand animal psychology.HIS WORKS:-

- The Making of Zimri Bunker: A Story of Nantucket in the Early Days (1899), illustrated by B. Rosenmeyer

- Ways of Wood Folk (1899), illustrated by Charles Copeland
- Wilderness Ways (1900), illustrated by Charles Copeland
- Beasts of the Field (1901), illustrated by Charles Copeland
- Fowls of the Air (1901), illustrated by Charles Copeland
- Secrets of the Woods (1901), illustrated by Charles Copeland
- School of the Woods: Some life studies of animal instincts and animal training (1902), illustrated by Charles Copeland
- Wood Folk at School (1903), illustrated by Charles Copeland
- A Little Brother to the Bear and Other Animal Studies (1903), illustrated by Charles Copeland
- Following the Deer (1903), illustrated by Charles Copeland
- Northern Trails (1905), illustrated by Charles Copeland
- Brier-Patch Philosophy, by "Peter Rabbit" (1906), illustrated by Charles Copeland
- Whose Home Is the Wilderness: Some Studies of Wild Animal Life (1907), illustrated by Charles Copeland
- Outlines of English Literature (1917)
- How Animals Talk: And Other Pleasant Studies of Birds and Beasts (1919), illustrated by Charles Copeland
- Wood-folk Comedies: The Play of Wild-Animal Life on a Natural Stage (1920), illustrated by Charles Livingston Bull
- Mother Nature: A Study of Animal Life and Death (1923), illustrated by Charles Livingston Bull
- The Spirit of the Wild: Observations in the Animal World (1956), illustrated by Ray Houlihan
- Wings of the Forest (1957), illustrated by Ray Houlihan

Reissues

- Northern Trails (1905), 390pp., was reissued in two volumes as:
 - Wayeeses the White Wolf (1907), 128pp.
 - Stories from Northern Trails (1908), 158pp.

Wood Folk Series

- Ways of Wood Folk (1899)
- Wilderness Ways (1900)
- Secrets of the Woods (1901)
- Wood Folk at School (1903)
- A Little Brother to the Bear and Other Animal Studies. Wood Folk Series Book V (1904) 178pp. (shortened version of the 280pp. 1903 edition)
- Northern Trails Book I. Wood Folk Series Book VI (1908) 128pp. (same content as Wayeeses the White Wolf)
- Northern Trails Book II Wood Folk Series Book VII (1908) 158pp. (same content as Stories from Northern Trails)[1]

II.DISCUSSION

A child and a man were one day walking on the seashore when the child found a little shell and held it to his ear. Suddenly he heard sounds,—strange, low, melodious sounds, as if the shell were remembering and repeating to itself the murmurs of its ocean home. The child's face filled with wonder as he listened. Here in the little shell, apparently, was a voice from another world, and he listened with delight to its mystery and music. Then came the man, explaining that the child heard nothing strange; that the pearly curves of the shell simply caught a multitude of sounds too faint for human ears, and filled the glimmering hollows with the murmur of innumerable echoes. It was not a new world, but only the unnoticed harmony of the old that had aroused the child's wonder. Some such experience as this awaits us when we begin the study of literature, which has always two aspects, one of simple enjoyment and appreciation, the other of analysis and exact description. Let a little song appeal to the ear, or a noble book to the heart, and for the moment, at least, we discover a new world, a world so different from our own that it seems a place of dreams and magic. To enter

and enjoy this new world, to love good books for their own sake, is the chief thing; to analyze and explain them is a less joyous but still an important matter. Behind every book is a man; behind the man is the race; and behind the race are the natural and social environments whose influence is unconsciously reflected. These also we must know, if the book is to speak its whole message. In a word, we have now reached a point where we wish to understand as well as to enjoy literature; and the first step, since exact definition is impossible, is to determine some of its essential qualities. Qualities of literature. The first significant thing is the essentially artistic quality of all literature. All art is the expression of life in forms of truth and beauty; or rather, it is the reflection of some truth and beauty which are in the world, but which remain unnoticed until brought to our attention by some sensitive human soul, just as the delicate curves of the shell reflect sounds and harmonies too faint to be otherwise noticed. A hundred men may pass a hayfield and see only the sweaty toil and the windrows of dried grass; but here is one who pauses by a Roumanian meadow, where girls are making hay and singing as they work. He looks deeper, sees truth and beauty where we see only dead grass, and he reflects what he sees in a little poem in which the hay tells its own story: Yesterday's flowers am I, And I have drunk my last sweet draught of dew. Young maidens came and sang me to my death; The moon looks down and sees me in my shroud, The shroud of my last dew. Yesterday's flowers that are yet in me Must needs make way for all to-morrow's flowers. The maidens, too, that sang me to my death Must even so make way for all the maids That are to come. And as my soul, so too their soul will be Laden with fragrance of the days gone by. The maidens that to-morrow come this way Will not remember that I once did bloom, For they will only see the new-born flowers. Yet will my perfume-laden soul bring back, As a sweet memory, to women's hearts Their days of maidenhood. And then they will be sorry that they came To sing me to my death; And all the butterflies will mourn for me. I bear away with me The sunshine's dear remembrance, and the low Soft murmurs of the spring. My breath is sweet as children's prattle is; I drank in all the whole earth's fruitfulness, To make of it the fragrance of my soul That shall outlive my death.[1] One who reads only that first exquisite line, "Yesterday's flowers am I," can never again see hay without recalling the beauty that was hidden from his eyes until the poet found it. In the same pleasing, surprising way, all artistic work must be a kind of revelation. Thus architecture is probably the oldest of the arts; yet we still have many builders but few architects, that is, men whose work in wood or stone suggests some hidden truth and beauty to the human senses. So in literature, which is the art that expresses life in words that appeal to our own sense of the beautiful, we have many writers but few artists. In the broadest sense, perhaps, literature means simply the written records of the race, including all its history and sciences, as well as its poems and novels; in the narrower sense literature is the artistic record of life, and most of our writing is excluded from it, just as the mass of our buildings, mere shelters from storm and from cold, are excluded from architecture. A history or a work of science may be and sometimes is literature, but only as we forget the subject-matter and the presentation of facts in the simple beauty of its expression. The second quality of literature is its suggestiveness, its appeal to our emotions and imagination rather than to our intellect. It is not so much what it says as what it awakens in us that constitutes its charm. When Milton makes Satan say, "Myself am Hell," he does not state any fact, but rather opens up in these three tremendous words a whole world of speculation and imagination. When Faustus in the presence of Helen asks, "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?" he does not state a fact or expect an answer. He opens a door through which our imagination enters a new world, a world of music, love, beauty, heroism,—the whole splendid world of Greek literature. Such magic is in words. When Shakespeare describes the young Biron as speaking In such apt and gracious words That aged ears play truant at his tales, he has unconsciously given not only an excellent description of himself, but the measure of all literature, which makes us play truant with the present world and run away to live awhile in the pleasant realm of fancy. The province of all art is not to instruct but to delight; and only as literature delights us, causing each reader to build in his own soul that "lordly pleasure house" of which Tennyson dreamed in his "Palace of Art," is it worthy of its name. The third characteristic of literature, arising directly from the other two, is its permanence. The world does not live by bread alone. Notwithstanding its hurry and bustle and apparent absorption in material things, it does not willingly let any beautiful thing perish. This is even more true of its songs than of its painting and sculpture; though permanence is a quality we should hardly expect in the present deluge of books and magazines pouring day and night from our presses in the name of literature. But this problem of too many books is not modern, as we suppose. It has been a problem ever since Caxton brought the first printing press from Flanders, four hundred years ago, and in the shadow of Westminster Abbey opened his little shop and advertised his wares as "good and chepe." Even earlier, a thousand years before Caxton and his printing press, the busy scholars of the great library of Alexandria found that the number of parchments was much too great for them to handle; and now, when we print more in a week than all the Alexandrian scholars could copy in a century, it would seem impossible that any production could be permanent; that any song or story could live to give delight in future ages. But literature is like a river in flood, which gradually purifies itself in two ways,—the mud settles to the bottom, and the scum rises to the top. When we examine the writings that by common consent constitute our literature, the clear stream purified of its dross, we find at least two more qualities, which we call the tests of literature, and which determine its permanence. Tests of literature. The first of these is universality, that is, the appeal to the widest

human interests and the simplest human emotions. Though we speak of national and race literatures, like the Greek or Teutonic, and though each has certain superficial marks arising out of the peculiarities of its own people, it is nevertheless true that good literature knows no nationality, nor any bounds save those of humanity. It is occupied chiefly with elementary passions and emotions,—love and hate, joy and sorrow, fear and faith,—which are an essential part of our human nature; and the more it reflects these emotions the more surely does it awaken a response in men of every race. Every father must respond to the parable of the prodigal son; wherever men are heroic, they will acknowledge the mastery of Homer; wherever a man thinks on the strange phenomenon of evil in the world, he will find his own thoughts in the Book of Job; in whatever place men love their children, their hearts must be stirred by the tragic sorrow of Oedipus and King Lear. All these are but shining examples of the law that only as a book or a little song appeals to universal human interest does it become permanent. The second test is a purely personal one, and may be expressed in the indefinite word “style.” It is only in a mechanical sense that style is “the adequate expression of thought,” or “the peculiar manner of expressing thought,” or any other of the definitions that are found in the rhetorics. In a deeper sense, style is the man, that is, the unconscious expression of the writer’s own personality. It is the very soul of one man reflecting,[2] as in a glass, the thoughts and feelings of humanity. As no glass is colorless, but tinges more or less deeply the reflections from its surface, so no author can interpret human life without unconsciously giving to it the native hue of his own soul. It is this intensely personal element that constitutes style. Every permanent book has more or less of these two elements, the objective and the subjective, the universal and the personal, the deep thought and feeling of the race reflected and colored by the writer’s own life and experience. The object in studying literature. Aside from the pleasure of reading, of entering into a new world and having our imagination quickened, the study of literature has one definite object, and that is to know men. Now man is ever a dual creature; he has an outward and an inner nature; he is not only a doer of deeds, but a dreamer of dreams; and to know him, the man of any age, we must search deeper than his history. History records his deeds, his outward acts largely; but every great act springs from an ideal, and to understand this we must read his literature, where we find his ideals recorded. When we read a history of the Anglo-Saxons, for instance, we learn that they were sea rovers, pirates, explorers, great eaters and drinkers; and we know something of their hovels and habits, and the lands which they harried and plundered. All that is interesting; but it does not tell us what most we want to know about these old ancestors of ours,—not only what they did, but what they thought and felt; how they looked on life and death; what they loved, what they feared, and what they revered in God and man. Then we turn from history to the literature which they themselves produced, and instantly we become acquainted. These hardy people were not simply fighters and freebooters; they were men like ourselves; their emotions awaken instant response in the souls of their descendants. At the words of their gleemen we thrill again to their wild love of freedom and the open sea; we grow tender at their love of home, and patriotic at their deathless loyalty to their chief, whom they chose for themselves and hoisted on their shields in symbol of his leadership. Once more we grow respectful in the presence of pure womanhood, or melancholy before the sorrows and problems of life, or humbly confident, looking up to the God whom they dared to call the Allfather. All these and many more intensely real emotions pass through our souls as we read the few shining fragments of verses that the jealous ages have left us. It is so with any age or people. To understand them we must read not simply their history, which records their deeds, but their literature, which records the dreams that made their deeds possible. So Aristotle was profoundly right when he said that “poetry is more serious and philosophical than history”; and Goethe, when he explained literature as “the humanization of the whole world.” Importance of literature. It is a curious and prevalent opinion that literature, like all art, is a mere play of imagination, pleasing enough, like a new novel, but without any serious or practical importance. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Literature preserves the ideals of a people; and ideals—love, faith, duty, friendship, freedom, reverence—are the part of human life most worthy of preservation. The Greeks were a marvelous people; yet of all their mighty works we cherish only a few ideals,—ideals of beauty in perishable stone, and ideals of truth in imperishable prose and poetry. It was simply the ideals of the Greeks and Hebrews and Romans, preserved in their literature, which made them what they were, and which determined their value to future generations. Our democracy, the boast of all English-speaking nations, is a dream; not the doubtful and sometimes disheartening spectacle presented in our legislative halls, but the lovely and immortal ideal of a free and equal manhood, preserved as a most precious heritage in every great literature from the Greeks to the Anglo-Saxons. All our arts, our sciences, even our inventions are founded squarely upon ideals; for under every invention is still the dream of Beowulf, that man may overcome the forces of nature; and the foundation of all our sciences and discoveries is the immortal dream that men “shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” In a word, our whole civilization, our freedom, our progress, our homes, our religion, rest solidly upon ideals for their foundation. Nothing but an ideal ever endures upon earth. It is therefore impossible to overestimate the practical importance of literature, which preserves these ideals from fathers to sons, while men, cities, governments, civilizations, vanish from the face of the earth. It is only when we remember this that we appreciate the action of the devout Mussulman, who picks up and carefully preserves every scrap of paper on which words are written, because the scrap may perchance contain the name of Allah, and the ideal is too

enormously important to be neglected or lost. Summary of the subject. We are now ready, if not to define, at least to understand a little more clearly the object of our present study. Literature is the expression of life in words of truth and beauty; it is the written record of man's spirit, of his thoughts, emotions, aspirations; it is the history, and the only history, of the human soul. It is characterized by its artistic, its suggestive, its permanent qualities. Its two tests are its universal interest and its personal style. Its object, aside from the delight it gives us, is to know man, that is, the soul of man rather than his actions; and since it preserves to the race the ideals upon which all our civilization is founded, it is one of the most important and delightful subjects that can occupy the human mind.

III.RESULTS

Here is the story of Beowulf, the earliest and the greatest epic, or heroic poem, in our literature. It begins with a prologue, which is not an essential part of the story, but which we review gladly for the sake of the splendid poetical conception that produced Scyld, king of the Spear Danes.[2] At a time when the Spear Danes were without a king, a ship came sailing into their harbor. It was filled with treasures and weapons of war; and in the midst of these warlike things was a baby sleeping. No man sailed the ship; it came of itself, bringing the child, whose name was Scyld. Now Scyld grew and became a mighty warrior, and led the Spear Danes for many years, and was their king. When his son Beowulf[3] had become strong and wise enough to rule, then Wyrð (Fate), who speaks but once to any man, came and stood at hand; and it was time for Scyld to go. This is how they buried him: Then Scyld departed, at word of Wyrð spoken, The hero to go to the home of the gods. Sadly they bore him to brink of the ocean, Comrades, still heeding his word of command. There rode in the harbor the prince's ship, ready, With prow curving proudly and shining sails set. Shipward they bore him, their hero beloved; The mighty they laid at the foot of the mast. Treasures were there from far and near gathered, Byrnie of battle, armor and swords; Never a keel sailed out of a harbor So splendidly tricked with the trappings of war. They heaped on his bosom a hoard of bright jewels To fare with him forth on the flood's great breast. No less gift they gave than the Unknown provided, When alone, as a child, he came in from the mere. High o'er his head waved a bright golden standard— Now let the waves bear their wealth to the holm. Sad-souled they gave back its gift to the ocean, Mournful their mood as he sailed out to sea.[4] "And no man," says the poet, "neither counselor nor hero, can tell who received that lading." One of Scyld's descendants was Hrothgar, king of the Danes; and with him the story of our Beowulf begins. Hrothgar in his old age had built near the sea a mead hall called Heorot, the most splendid hall in the whole world, where the king and his thanes gathered nightly to feast and to listen to the songs of his gleemen. One night, as they were all sleeping, a frightful monster,[3] Grendel, broke into the hall, killed thirty of the sleeping warriors, and carried off their bodies to devour them in his lair under the sea. The appalling visit was speedily repeated, and fear and death reigned in the great hall. The warriors fought at first; but fled when they discovered that no weapon could harm the monster. Heorot was left deserted and silent. For twelve winters Grendel's horrible raids continued, and joy was changed to mourning among the Spear Danes. At last the rumor of Grendel crossed over the sea to the land of the Geats, where a young hero dwelt in the house of his uncle, King Hygelac. Beowulf was his name, a man of immense strength and courage, and a mighty swimmer who had developed his powers fighting the "nickers," whales, walrus and seals, in the icebound northern ocean. When he heard the story, Beowulf was stirred to go and fight the monster and free the Danes, who were his father's friends. With fourteen companions he crosses the sea. There is an excellent bit of ocean poetry here (ll. 210-224), and we get a vivid idea of the hospitality of a brave people by following the poet's description of Beowulf's meeting with King Hrothgar and Queen Wealhtheow, and of the joy and feasting and story-telling in Heorot. The picture of Wealhtheow passing the mead cup to the warriors with her own hand is a noble one, and plainly indicates the reverence paid by these strong men to their wives and mothers. Night comes on; the fear of Grendel is again upon the Danes, and all withdraw after the king has warned Beowulf of the frightful danger of sleeping in the hall. But Beowulf lies down with his warriors, saying proudly that, since weapons will not avail against the monster, he will grapple with him bare handed and trust to a warrior's strength. Forth from the fens, from the misty moorlands, Grendel came gliding—God's wrath[5] he bore— Came under clouds, until he saw clearly, Glittering with gold plates, the mead hall of men. Down fell the door, though fastened with fire bands; Open it sprang at the stroke of his paw. Swollen with rage burst in the bale-bringer; Flamed in his eyes a fierce light, likest fire.[6] At the sight of men again sleeping in the hall, Grendel laughs in his heart, thinking of his feast. He seizes the nearest sleeper, crushes his "bone case" with a bite, tears him limb from limb, and swallows him. Then he creeps to the couch of Beowulf and stretches out a claw, only to find it clutched in a grip of steel. A sudden terror strikes the monster's heart. He roars, struggles, tries to jerk his arm free; but Beowulf leaps to his feet and grapples his enemy bare handed. To and fro they surge. Tables are overturned; golden benches ripped from their fastenings; the whole building quakes, and only its iron bands keep it from falling to pieces. Beowulf's companions are on their feet now, hacking vainly at the monster with swords and battle-axes, adding their shouts to the crashing of furniture and the howling "war song" of Grendel. Outside in the town the Danes stand shivering

at the uproar. Slowly the monster struggles to the door, dragging Beowulf, whose fingers crack with the strain, but who never relaxes his first grip. Suddenly a wide wound opens in the monster's side; the sinews snap; the whole arm is wrenched off at the shoulder; and Grendel escapes shrieking across the moor, and plunges into the sea to die. Beowulf first exults in his night's work; then he hangs the huge arm with its terrible claws from a cross-beam over the king's seat, as one would hang up a bear's skin after a hunt. At daylight came the Danes; and all day long, in the intervals of singing, story-telling, speech making, and gift giving, they return to wonder at the mighty "grip of Grendel" and to rejoice in Beowulf's victory. When night falls a great feast is spread in Heorot, and the Danes sleep once more in the great hall. At midnight comes another monster, a horrible, half-human creature,[7] mother of Grendel, raging to avenge her offspring. She thunders at the door; the Danes leap up and grasp their weapons; but the monster enters, seizes Aeschere, who is friend and adviser of the king, and rushes away with him over the fens. The old scenes of sorrow are reviewed in the morning; but Beowulf says simply: Sorrow not, wise man. It is better for each That his friend he avenge than that he mourn much. Each of us shall the end await Of worldly life: let him who may gain Honor ere death. That is for a warrior, When he is dead, afterwards best. Arise, kingdom's guardian! Let us quickly go To view the track of Grendel's kinsman. I promise it thee: he will not escape, Nor in earth's bosom, nor in mountain-wood, Nor in ocean's depths, go where he will.[8] Then he girds himself for the new fight and follows the track of the second enemy across the fens. Here is Hrothgar's description of the place where live the monsters, "spirits of elsewhere," as he calls them: They inhabit The dim land that gives shelter to the wolf, The windy headlands, perilous fen paths, Where, under mountain mist, the stream flows down And floods the ground. Not far hence, but a mile, The mere stands, over which hang death-chill groves, A wood fast-rooted overshades the flood; There every night a ghastly miracle Is seen, fire in the water. No man knows, Not the most wise, the bottom of that mere. The firm-horned heath-stalker, the hart, when pressed, Wearied by hounds, and hunted from afar, Will rather die of thirst upon its bank Than bend his head to it. It is unholy. Dark to the clouds its yeasty waves mount up When wind stirs hateful tempest, till the air Grows dreary, and the heavens pour down tears.[9] Beowulf plunges into the horrible place, while his companions wait for him on the shore. For a long time he sinks through the flood; then, as he reaches bottom, Grendel's mother rushes out upon him and drags him into a cave, where sea monsters swarm at him from behind and gnash his armor with their tusks. The edge of his sword is turned with the mighty blow he deals the merewif; but it harms not the monster. Casting the weapon aside, he grips her and tries to hurl her down, while her claws and teeth clash upon his corslet but cannot penetrate the steel rings. She throws her bulk upon him, crushes him down, draws a short sword and plunges it at him; but again his splendid byrnie saves him. He is wearied now, and oppressed. Suddenly, as his eye sweeps the cave, he catches sight of a magic sword, made by the giants long ago, too heavy for warriors to wield. Struggling up he seizes the weapon, whirls it and brings down a crashing blow upon the monster's neck. It smashes through the ring bones; the merewif falls, and the fight is won. The cave is full of treasures; but Beowulf heeds them not, for near him lies Grendel, dead from the wound received the previous night. Again Beowulf swings the great sword and strikes off his enemy's head; and lo, as the venomous blood touches the sword blade, the steel melts like ice before the fire, and only the hilt is left in Beowulf's hand. Taking the hilt and the head, the hero enters the ocean and mounts up to the shore. Only his own faithful band were waiting there; for the Danes, seeing the ocean bubble with fresh blood, thought it was all over with the hero and had gone home. And there they were, mourning in Heorot, when Beowulf returned with the monstrous head of Grendel carried on a spear shaft by four of his stoutest followers. In the last part of the poem there is another great fight. Beowulf is now an old man; he has reigned for fifty years, beloved by all his people. He has overcome every enemy but one, a fire dragon keeping watch over an enormous treasure hidden among the mountains. One day a wanderer stumbles upon the enchanted cave and, entering, takes a jeweled cup while the fire-drake sleeps heavily. That same night the dragon, in a frightful rage, belching forth fire and smoke, rushes down upon the nearest villages, leaving a trail of death and terror behind him. Again Beowulf goes forth to champion his people. As he approaches the dragon's cave, he has a presentiment that death lurks within: Sat on the headland there the warrior king; Farewell he said to hearth-companions true, The gold-friend of the Geats; his mind was sad, Death-ready, restless. And Wyrd was drawing nigh, Who now must meet and touch the aged man, To seek the treasure that his soul had saved And separate his body from his life.[10] There is a flash of illumination, like that which comes to a dying man, in which his mind runs back over his long life and sees something of profound meaning in the elemental sorrow moving side by side with magnificent courage. Then follows the fight with the fire-drake, in which Beowulf, wrapped in fire and smoke, is helped by the heroism of Wiglaf, one of his companions. The dragon is slain, but the fire has entered Beowulf's lungs and he knows that Wyrd is at hand. This is his thought, while Wiglaf removes his battered armor: "One deep regret I have: that to a son I may not give the armor I have worn, To bear it after me. For fifty years I ruled these people well, and not a king Of those who dwell around me, dared oppress Or meet me with his hosts. At home I waited For the time that Wyrd controls. Mine own I kept, Nor quarrels sought, nor ever falsely swore. Now, wounded sore, I wait for joy to come." [11] He sends Wiglaf into the fire-drake's cave, who finds it filled with rare treasures and, most wonderful of all, a golden banner from which light proceeds and illumines all the darkness. But

Wiglaf cares little for the treasures; his mind is full of his dying chief. He fills his hands with costly ornaments and hurries to throw them at his hero's feet. The old man looks with sorrow at the gold, thanks the "Lord of all" that by death he has gained more riches for his people, and tells his faithful thane how his body shall be burned on the Whale ness, or headland: "My life is well paid for this hoard; and now Care for the people's needs. I may no more Be with them. Bid the warriors raise a barrow After the burning, on the ness by the sea, On Hronesness, which shall rise high and be For a remembrance to my people. Seafarers Who from afar over the mists of waters Drive foamy keels may call it Beowulf's Mount Hereafter." Then the hero from his neck Put off a golden collar; to his thane, To the young warrior, gave it with his helm, Armlet and corslet; bade him use them well. "Thou art the last Waegmunding of our race, For fate has swept my kinsmen all away. Earls in their strength are to their Maker gone, And I must follow them." [12] Beowulf was still living when Wiglaf sent a messenger hurriedly to his people; when they came they found him dead, and the huge dragon dead on the sand beside him. Then the Goth's people reared a mighty pile With shields and armour hung, as he had asked, And in the midst the warriors laid their lord, Lamenting. Then the warriors on the mount Kindled a mighty bale fire; the smoke rose Black from the Swedish pine, the sound of flame Mingled with sound of weeping; ... while smoke Spread over heaven. Then upon the hill The people of the Weders wrought a mound, High, broad, and to be seen far out at sea. In ten days they had built and walled it in As the wise thought most worthy; placed in it Rings, jewels, other treasures from the hoard. They left the riches, golden joy of earls, In dust, for earth to hold; where yet it lies, Useless as ever. Then about the mound The warriors rode, and raised a mournful song For their dead king; exalted his brave deeds, Holding it fit men honour their liege lord, Praise him and love him when his soul is fled. Thus the [Geat's] people, sharers of his hearth, Mourned their chief's fall, praised him, of kings, of men The mildest and the kindest, and to all His people gentlest, yearning for their praise. [13] One is tempted to linger over the details of the magnificent ending: the unselfish heroism of Beowulf, the great prototype of King Alfred; the generous grief of his people, ignoring gold and jewels in the thought of the greater treasure they had lost; the memorial mound on the low cliff, which would cause every returning mariner to steer a straight course to harbor in the remembrance of his dead hero; and the pure poetry which marks every noble line. But the epic is great enough and simple enough to speak for itself. Search the literatures of the world, and you will find no other such picture of a brave man's death. Concerning the history of Beowulf a whole library has been written, and scholars still differ too radically for us to express a positive judgment. This much, however, is clear,—that there existed, at the time the poem was composed, various northern legends of Beowa, a half-divine hero, and the monster Grendel. The latter has been interpreted in various ways,—sometimes as a bear, and again as the malaria of the marsh lands. For those interested in symbols the simplest interpretation of these myths is to regard Beowulf's successive fights with the three dragons as the overcoming, first, of the overwhelming danger of the sea, which was beaten back by the dykes; second, the conquering of the sea itself, when men learned to sail upon it; and third, the conflict with the hostile forces of nature, which are overcome at last by man's indomitable will and perseverance. All this is purely mythical; but there are historical incidents to reckon with. About the year 520 a certain northern chief, called by the chronicler Chochilaicus (who is generally identified with the Hygelac of the epic), led a huge plundering expedition up the Rhine. After a succession of battles he was overcome by the Franks, but—and now we enter a legendary region once more—not until a gigantic nephew of Hygelac had performed heroic feats of valor, and had saved the remnants of the host by a marvelous feat of swimming. The majority of scholars now hold that these historical events and personages were celebrated in the epic; but some still assert that the events which gave a foundation for Beowulf occurred wholly on English soil, where the poem itself was undoubtedly written. The rhythm of Beowulf and indeed of all our earliest poetry depended upon accent and alliteration; that is, the beginning of two or more words in the same line with the same sound or letter. The lines were made up of two short halves, separated by a pause. No rime was used; but a musical effect was produced by giving each half line two strongly accented syllables. Each full line, therefore, had four accents, three of which (i.e. two in the first half, and one in the second) usually began with the same sound or letter. The musical effect was heightened by the harp with which the gleeman accompanied his singing. The poetical form will be seen clearly in the following selection from the wonderfully realistic description of the fens haunted by Grendel. It will need only one or two readings aloud to show that many of these strange-looking words are practically the same as those we still use, though many of the vowel sounds were pronounced differently by our ancestors. ... Hie dygel lond Warigeath, wulfhleothu, windige naessas, Frecne fen-gelad, thaer fyrngen-stream Under naessa genipu nither gewiteth, Flod under foldan. Nis thaet feor heonon, Mil-gemeares, thaet se mere standeth, Ofer thaem hongiaeth hrinde bearwas ... They (a) darksome land Ward (inhabit), wolf cliffs, windy nesses, Frightful fen paths where mountain stream Under nesses' mists nether (downward) wanders, A flood under earth. It is not far hence, By mile measure, that the mere stands, Over which hang rimy groves. WIDSITH. The poem "Widsith," the wide goer or wanderer, is in part, [4] at least, probably the oldest in our language. The author and the date of its composition are unknown; but the personal account of the minstrel's life belongs to the time before the Saxons first came to England. [14] It expresses the wandering life of the gleeman, who goes forth into the world to abide here or there, according as he is rewarded for his singing. From the numerous references to rings

and rewards, and from the praise given to generous givers, it would seem that literature as a paying profession began very early in our history, and also that the pay was barely sufficient to hold soul and body together. Of all our modern poets, Goldsmith wandering over Europe paying for his lodging with his songs is most suggestive of this first recorded singer of our race. His last lines read: Thus wandering, they who shape songs for men Pass over many lands, and tell their need, And speak their thanks, and ever, south or north, Meet someone skilled in songs and free in gifts, Who would be raised among his friends to fame And do brave deeds till light and life are gone. He who has thus wrought himself praise shall have A settled glory underneath the stars.[15] DEOR'S LAMENT. In "Deor" we have another picture of the Saxon scop, or minstrel, not in glad wandering, but in manly sorrow. It seems that the scop's living depended entirely upon his power to please his chief, and that at any time he might be supplanted by a better poet. Deor had this experience, and comforts himself in a grim way by recalling various examples of men who have suffered more than himself. The poem is arranged in strophes, each one telling of some afflicted hero and ending with the same refrain: His sorrow passed away; so will mine. "Deor" is much more poetic than "Widsith," and is the one perfect lyric[16] of the Anglo-Saxon period. Weland for a woman knew too well exile. Strong of soul that earl, sorrow sharp he bore; To companionship he had care and weary longing, Winter-freezing wretchedness. Woe he found again, again, After that Nithhad in a need had laid him— Staggering sinew-wounds—sorrowsmitten man! That he overwent; this also may I.

IV. CONCLUSION

We have now read some of our earliest records, and have been surprised, perhaps, that men who are generally described in the histories as savage fighters and freebooters could produce such excellent poetry. It is the object of the study of all literature to make us better acquainted with men,—not simply with their deeds, which is the function of history, but with the dreams and ideals which underlie all their actions. So a reading of this early Anglo-Saxon poetry not only makes us acquainted, but also leads to a profound respect for the men who were our ancestors. Before we study more of their literature it is well to glance briefly at their life and language. THE NAME Originally the name Anglo-Saxon denotes two of the three Germanic tribes,—Jutes, Angles, and Saxons,— who in the middle of the fifth century left their homes on the shores of the North Sea and the Baltic to conquer and colonize distant Britain. Angeln was the home of one tribe, and the name still clings to the spot whence some of our forefathers sailed on their momentous voyage. The old Saxon word angul or ongul means a hook, and the English verb angle is used invariably by Walton and older writers in the sense of fishing. We may still think, therefore, of the first Angles as hook-men, possibly because of their fishing, more probably because the shore where they lived, at the foot of the peninsula of Jutland, was bent in the shape of a fishhook. The name Saxon from seax, sax, a short sword, means the sword-man, and from the name we may judge something of the temper of the hardy fighters who preceded the Angles into Britain. The Angles were the most numerous of the conquering tribes, and from them the new home was called Anglaland. By gradual changes this became first Engleland and then England. More than five hundred years after the landing of these tribes, and while they called themselves Englishmen, we find the Latin writers of the Middle Ages speaking of the inhabitants of Britain as Anglisaxones,—that is, Saxons of England,—to distinguish them from the Saxons of the Continent. In the Latin charters of King Alfred the same name appears; but it is never seen or heard in his native speech. There he always speaks of his beloved "Engleland" and of his brave "Englisc" people. In the sixteenth century, when the old name of Englishmen clung to the new people resulting from the union of Saxon and Norman, the name Anglo-Saxon was first used in the national sense by the scholar Camden[21] in his History of Britain; and since then it has been in general use among English writers. In recent years the name has gained a wider significance, until it is now used to denote a spirit rather than a nation, the brave, vigorous, enlarging spirit that characterizes the English-speaking races everywhere, and that has already put a broad belt of English law and English liberty around the whole world. THE LIFE. If the literature of a people springs directly out of its life, then the stern, barbarous life of our Saxon forefathers would seem, at first glance, to promise little of good literature. Outwardly their life was a constant hardship, a perpetual struggle against savage nature and savage men. Behind them were gloomy forests inhabited by wild beasts and still wilder men, and peopled in their imagination with dragons and evil shapes. In front of them, thundering at the very dikes for entrance, was the treacherous North Sea, with its fogs and storms and ice, but with that indefinable call of the deep that all men hear who live long beneath its influence. Here they lived, a big, blond, powerful race, and hunted and fought and sailed, and drank and feasted when their labor was done. Almost the first thing we notice about these big, fearless, childish men is that they love the sea; and because they love it they hear and answer its call: ... No delight has he in the world, Nor in aught save the roll of the billows; but always a longing, A yearning uneasiness, hastens him on to the sea.[22] As might be expected, this love of the ocean finds expression in all their poetry. In Beowulf alone there are fifteen names for the sea, from the holm, that is, the horizon sea, the "upmounding," to the brim, which is the ocean flinging its welter of sand and creamy foam upon the beach at your feet. And the figures used to describe or glorify it—"the swan road, the whale path, the heaving battle plain"—are almost

as numerous. In all their poetry there is a magnificent sense of lordship over the wild sea even in its hour of tempest and fury: Often it befalls us, on the ocean's highways, In the boats our boatmen, when the storm is roaring, Leap the billows over, on our stallions of the foam.[23] THE INNER LIFE. A man's life is more than his work; his dream is ever greater than his achievement; and literature reflects not so much man's deed as the spirit which animates him; not the poor thing that he does, but rather the splendid thing that he ever hopes to do. In no place is this more evident than in the age we are now studying. Those early sea kings were a marvelous mixture of savagery and sentiment, of rough living and of deep feeling, of splendid courage and the deep melancholy of men who know their limitations and have faced the unanswered problem of death. They were not simply fearless freebooters who harried every coast in their war galleys. If that were all, they would have no more history or literature than the Barbary pirates, of whom the same thing could be said. These strong fathers of ours were men of profound emotions. In all their fighting the love of an untarnished glory was uppermost; and under the warrior's savage exterior was hidden a great love of home and homely virtues, and a reverence for the one woman to whom he would presently return in triumph. So when the wolf hunt was over, or the desperate fight was won, these mighty men would gather in the banquet hall, and lay their weapons aside where the open fire would flash upon them, and there listen to the songs of Scop and Gleeman,—men who could put into adequate words the emotions and aspirations that all men feel but that only a few can ever express: Music and song where the heroes sat— The glee-wood rang, a song uprose When Hrothgar's scop gave the hall good cheer.[24] It is this great and hidden life of the Anglo-Saxons that finds expression in all their literature. Briefly, it is summed up in five great principles,—their love of personal freedom, their responsiveness to nature, their religion, their reverence for womanhood, and their struggle for glory as a ruling motive in every noble life. In reading Anglo-Saxon poetry it is well to remember these five principles, for they are like the little springs at the head of a great river,—clear, pure springs of poetry, and out of them the best of our literature has always flowed. Thus when we read, Blast of the tempest—it aids our oars; Rolling of thunder—it hurts us not; Rush of the hurricane—bending its neck To speed us whither our wills are bent, we realize that these sea rovers had the spirit of kinship with the mighty life of nature; and kinship with nature invariably expresses itself in poetry. Again, when we read, Now hath the man O'ercome his troubles. No pleasure does he lack, Nor steeds, nor jewels, nor the joys of mead, Nor any treasure that the earth can give, O royal woman, if he have but thee,[25] we know we are dealing with an essentially noble man, not a savage; we are face to face with that profound reverence for womanhood which inspires the greater part of all good poetry, and we begin to honor as well as understand our ancestors. So in the matter of glory or honor; it was, apparently, not the love of fighting, but rather the love of honor resulting from fighting well, which animated our forefathers in every campaign. "He was a man deserving of remembrance" was the highest thing that could be said of a dead warrior; and "He is a man deserving of praise" was the highest tribute to the living. The whole secret of Beowulf's mighty life is summed up in the last line, "Ever yearning for his people's praise." So every tribe had its scop, or poet, more important than any warrior, who put the deeds of its heroes into the expressive words that constitute literature; and every banquet hall had its gleeman, who sang the scop's poetry in order that the deed and the man might be remembered. Oriental peoples built monuments to perpetuate the memory of their dead; but our ancestors made poems, which should live and stir men's souls long after monuments of brick and stone had crumbled away. It is to this intense love of glory and the desire to be remembered that we are indebted for Anglo-Saxon literature. OUR FIRST SPEECH. Our first recorded speech begins with the songs of Widsith and Deor, which the Anglo-Saxons may have brought with them when they first conquered Britain. At first glance these songs in their native dress look strange as a foreign tongue; but when we examine them carefully we find many words that have been familiar since childhood. We have seen this in Beowulf; but in prose the resemblance of this old speech to our own is even more striking. Here, for instance, is a fragment of the simple story of the conquest of Britain by our Anglo-Saxon ancestors: Her Hengest and Aesc his sunu gefuhton with Bryttas, on thaere stowe the is gecweden Creccanford, and thaer ofslogon feower thusenda wera. And tha Bryttas tha forleton Cent-lond, and mid myclum ege flugon to Lundenbyrig. (At this time Hengest and Aesc, his son, fought against the Britons at the place which is called Crayford and there slew four thousand men. And then the Britons forsook Kentland, and with much fear fled to London town.)[26] The reader who utters these words aloud a few times will speedily recognize his own tongue, not simply in the words but also in the whole structure of the sentences. From such records we see that our speech is Teutonic in its origin; and when we examine any Teutonic language we learn that it is only a branch of the great Aryan or Indo-European family of languages. In life and language, therefore, we are related first to the Teutonic races, and through them to all the nations of this Indo-European family, which, starting with enormous vigor from their original home (probably in central Europe)[27] spread southward and westward, driving out the native tribes and slowly developing the mighty civilizations of India, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the wilder but more vigorous life of the Celts and Teutons. In all these languages—Sanskrit, Iranian, Greek, Latin, Celtic, Teutonic—we recognize the same root words for father and mother, for God and man, for the common needs and the common relations of life; and since words are windows through which we see the soul of this old people, we find certain ideals of love, home, faith, heroism, liberty, which seem to have been the very life of our forefathers, and which



were inherited by them from their old heroic and conquering ancestors. It was on the borders of the North Sea [5] that our fathers halted for unnumbered centuries on their westward journey, and slowly developed the national life and language which we now call Anglo-Saxon. It is this old vigorous Anglo-Saxon language which forms the basis of our modern English. If we read a paragraph from any good English book, and then analyze it, as we would a flower, to see what it contains, we find two distinct classes of words. The first class, containing simple words expressing the common things of life, makes up the strong framework of our language. These words are like the stem and bare branches of a mighty oak, and if we look them up in the dictionary we find that almost invariably they come to us from our Anglo-Saxon ancestors. The second and larger class of words is made up of those that give grace, variety, ornament, to our speech. They are like the leaves and blossoms of the same tree, and when we examine their history we find that they come to us from the Celts, Romans, Normans, and other peoples with whom we have been in contact in the long years of our development. The most prominent characteristic of our present language, therefore, is its dual character. Its best qualities—strength, simplicity, directness—come from Anglo-Saxon sources; its enormous added wealth of expression, its comprehensiveness, its plastic adaptability to new conditions and ideas, are largely the result of additions from other languages, and especially of its gradual absorption of the French language after the Norman Conquest. It is this dual character, this combination of native and foreign, of innate and exotic elements, which accounts for the wealth of our English language and literature. To see it in concrete form, we should read in succession *Beowulf* and *Paradise Lost*, the two great epics which show the root and the flower of our literary development. [6]

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