

in order that that wonderful sense of the unity of the church shall be preserved. Much needs to be done, however, in the way of education in our own denomination, if our churches are to be ready to take their part in whatever united action may be evolved. The writer is haunted by a question asked by a leading Baptist woman as she left the Conference Hall after the last session, "What are we going to do about it?"

VERA BARSON.

The Value of Denominational History.

(As illustrated from an unpublished church book of the 17th and 18th centuries).

(An address given to the Congregational Historical Society on May 15th, 1924).

ANTIQUARIANISM is regarded as the hobby of the few, and sectarian antiquarianism—the study of denominational origins—is at a double disadvantage of limitation, for why should we trouble about sects when the reason for their existence seems largely to have passed away? The result is that a Society for the study of denominational history is apt to become a Cinderella without Cinderella's good fortune—for she may count herself lucky to get an invitation even to an obscure corner of the annual denominational ball, and it is not often that a denominational prince picks up her slipper. I wonder whether the relative neglect from which all such societies suffer is not partly their own fault, and whether it is not largely due to our failure to present more clearly the practical values and present interests of the study of our past. That, at least, is the aim of this paper. Instead of an abstract argument that a denomination ought to support its own Historical Society much more widely and generously than it does, let us take a definite field of study, and see what it may yield along these lines of practical values and present interests.

The example here taken is a church-book of the Baptist Church gathered by the well-known Hanserd Knollys about 1642, but its continuous record does not begin till a year or two before his death in 1691. The manuscript, in many different hands, which belongs to the Angus Library of Regent's Park College, is found in a vellum-covered volume, with clasps, its size being 16in. by 6in. The book is not the

Minute-Book of the church (to which reference is occasionally made), though for part of the period covered it seems to have been used as a minute-book; originally, the record might better be called a Discipline Book, in which the more private and personal matters were recorded. The earliest date is September 26, 1689, and the latest Christmas Day, 1723. Four regular pastorates are included, though we have only the first year of the fourth, viz., those of Robert Steed, who became co-pastor with Knollys in 1689, and died whilst still in office in 1700, David Crosley, who was ordained in January 1702-3, and expelled on August 14, 1709, John Skepp ordained September 7th, 1714, died in office, December 1st, 1721, Humphrey Barrow, ordained June 5th, 1723, died in office, 1727 (Ivimey, III. p. 366). The church had 113 members in 1689, and 212 in 1721. It was one of some 26 Baptist churches of all types, which were found at this time in London, Southwark and Westminster, with a population of over half-a-million (Whitley, *History*, p. 181). Probably its inner life and problems may be taken as fairly typical of a "gathered" community of the time, of what we now call the Congregational polity.

(1) The first point to be made is that the study of such a record is the best way to realize with accuracy and proper emphasis what the principles of a denomination really mean. Instead of conventional and colourless statements, which admit of very different applications, we have here a picture of real life, with men and women acting under the stress of living convictions. In the meeting-place, first in George Yard, Thames Street (1688), some years later at the Bagnio, Newgate Street, and a little later still at Curriers' Hall, Cripplegate, we listen to the speech of a solemn and intensely earnest group of men and women, and we find where their interest really lay. It was not the fact, as is often supposed, that their chief concern was the negative one of "independency," i.e. of repudiating any interference from without; their concern was the positive one of maintaining what they held to be the Christian standard of faith and conduct within. We may feel that their microscopic examination of the lives and thoughts of their fellow-members was not wholly healthy, and had grave perils; yet we must admit that the endeavour to maintain a high quality of Christian life was the logical and necessary outcome of their principles. They were a separated church of men and women; they were bound to insist on a Christian ethic, the expression of a Christian faith, which should stand out emphatically from the conventionalism and loose morals of the age.

For convenience, I shall confine myself under this head

to the Discipline Book kept by Robert Steed from 1689 to 1700.* There seem to have been only about a score of cases of discipline in the course of the dozen years, which is a remarkable testimony to character, when we consider the rigorous scrutiny, and the social level from which most, perhaps all, the membership was drawn. The occupation of some is characterized in the list of members:—

A Taylor in Hungerford Market.

Sister living on the backside of Clement's next to the signe of the Haunch of Venison.

A chambermaid to Squ. Barrington.

The daughter of her that keeps the meeting-house.

A schoolmaster in Gravell Lane.

Half-a-dozen of the cases of discipline illustrate the Scriptural truth that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Two women members were convicted of having obtained money under false pretences from another woman—her little all of £40 saved up for old age. They told her that her capital would be increased if she lent it, but in fact the money was needed by one of these delinquents to pay her debts. They were both excluded from membership. Brother Brooksby, as a result of a transaction in hops with the member of another church, called him a rascal and a knave, and brought a law-suit against him. The matter received careful attention, but Brother Brooksby over-reached himself by putting in a document that was proved to be a forgery; exit Brother Brooksby. Brother Leeson not only failed to meet what was due to his creditors, and appropriated money due to his father-in-law, but aggravated this by behaving "as a rude Hector," as witnessed by a letter of threats duly read to the church. Brother Hind also failed to pay his debts, but the trouble here was intemperance in drink. Sister Foster was found guilty of a breach of trust in regard to some goods deposited in her keeping, and was proved a liar. In two cases the trouble was between husband and wife. A journeyman shoemaker was excluded for wife-beating, and for failing through idleness to make proper provision for his family. In another instance, the husband complained of the wife's bad language to him. After due examination, it was decided "that deep distressing poverty had afflicted her through his incapacity or negligence to get a livelihood or subsistence, whereby great provocations had been given her to speak and act unadvisedly"; the case was met by admonition and temporary suspension. Another set of domestic problems meets us in the relations of master and apprentice. Brother Hake, an apprentice to Brother Dennis, a scrivener, was charged with

* Published in *The Baptist Quarterly*, July and October, 1922.

negligence and disobedience, and with calumniating his master and mistress to their neighbours. Young Hake was brought up before the church to express his repentance, but threw out a hint that he was not content with the food he got, and was eventually again brought up by his master. This time he had thrown down and beaten another apprentice, and threatened this youth's master when he came to his rescue. When found about the place next morning, and told to be gone, "he held up his fists against Mr. Reep and told him it was well it was Sunday morning, otherwise had it been another day he would have beaten Mr. Reep." This young swashbuckler's fault was aggravated because Mr. Reep had been friendly with him. It was testified that Hake "had idly spent his time at Coffee houses playing at draffts. And that one time Mr. Reep aforesaid playing with him and having won the game of him, He making him pay the forfeit which was a dish of Coffee, He fell out with Mr. Reep and sayd as soon as he was gone that he had about him that which would do Mr. Reep's business which he could find in his heart to make use off; which was a penknife he had in his pocket to stab him withall." It was unfortunate for young Hake that he was born before the time of the Boy Scouts; they might have made an excellent fellow of him. But the stern church sent him into the outer darkness, to flourish that scrivener's penknife of his beyond our ken. Another apprentice in trouble was called Joseph Faircloth, a haberdasher, who did not live up to his first name, if he did to his second, for he became too intimate with a cheesemonger's wife, who kept him out late. These London prentices must have given their masters a world of trouble. Another apprentice case of the same kind is reported. There are two instances in which action is taken for non-attendance at meetings; the defence was the experience of spiritual temptations, which might have been regarded as a reason for going, not for stopping away; in two others there were frustrated attempts to get back on the church roll without due warrant. The only instance of excommunication for heresy—that of a man and his wife who denied the divine nature of Christ—was quite fairly dealt with. The only other type of case is that of a man who persisted in preaching elsewhere at the public meetings then called "Lectures," without seeming to the church to have competent gifts for it. The way in which the church dealt with him is both drastic and ingenious, though I do not for a moment suggest that *they* saw the subtle humour of it. They condemned him for preaching without formal approval by the church, for neglect of his business whilst he went preaching, with the result that he had to compound with his creditors, and also for failing to be

in his place in the church to which he belonged, whilst he was away preaching elsewhere! His exclusion, after admonition, only served to harden him in his evil courses, for we read that "instead of repenting he turned from the truth and, joyned with them that sprinkl infants, is ordained the pastor of a pbiterian congregation at Epping in Essex."

These details are of interest in themselves, and help us to reconstruct a much more living picture of the life and relations of a Separatist Church of the congregational order at the close of the seventeenth century. But the purpose for which I have appealed to them is to show how seriously these people took what is, after all, the foundation principle of a separated or gathered church—the character and conduct of its membership. Whatever we may think about the perils or the impossibility of exercising any such discipline to-day, at least we ought to realize that the discipline was an honest attempt to carry out the principles theoretically expressed in the self-governing polity. As long as that polity is retained, it would seem that both Baptists and Congregationalists are committed to the principle underlying it, and it is denominational history that forces us to realize what that principle really means when it is taken as seriously as it was in Newgate Street.

(2) In the second place, the value of denominational history is seen in its enabling us to discriminate between the transient and the permanent, to get a true perspective, in fact, to see church life steadily and see it whole. None of us can do this with perfect confidence and success for our own generation; but a study of the past will often remind us that our own concern about this or that is not necessarily a measure of its permanent value. The past is strewn with the ashes of controversies where the fires of passion once burnt fiercely, and at least one interesting example of this is afforded by the book before us. At the beginning of 1693, a group of twenty-two malcontents from the church at Horsley Down, Southwark, under the ministry of Benjamin Keach, sought fellowship with the Bagno Church under Robert Steed, "being dissatisfied with their setting up of common set form singing after it had been exploded by the Baptized Churches as a humane invention; and also being grieved with the manner of their proceeding with them when they declared their dissatisfaction with their introducing that innovation." Thereon hangs a tale, of some length. As Dr. Whitley has shown, in his recent *History of British Baptists*, the honour of first introducing hymns into the regular worship of an English congregation, established or dissenting, belongs to Benjamin Keach, and his book of 300 hymns, called *Spiritual Melody*, and published in 1691, was the first hymn-book to be so used,

though he had published hymns for children to learn as early as 1664. None of his hymns have survived in common use, and had the leaders of the "split" from this church owing to their use argued that Keach's hymns were doggerel, instead of arguing against the general principle of hymn-singing, we might have sympathized with them. Here are one or two specimens:—

Our wounds do stink and are corrupt,
 Hard swellings we do see;
 We want a little ointment, Lord,
 Let us more humble be. (p. 173)

Repentance like a bucket is
 To pump the water out;
 For leaky is our ship, alas,
 Which makes us look about. (p. 254)

Here meets them now that worm that gnaws,
 And plucks their bowels out;
 The pit, too, on them shuts her jaws,
 This dreadful is, no doubt. (p. 312)

But it was the principle of hymn-singing (as distinct from singing Scriptural psalms) that was at issue. Benjamin Keach's practice of hymn-singing, first introduced at the Communion Service, was spreading amongst Particular Baptist Churches, though vigorously attacked. In the same year as Keach published the first hymn-book, he issued an *apologia* for his practice, entitled, "The Breach Repaired in God's Worship," in which he elevates the practice to a "Sacred Truth of the Gospel" (p. 6), and couples its neglect, with that of the ministry, as the two chief causes of "our sad witherings." A favourite proof-text of his was Exodus xxxii. 18, "the noise of them that sing do I hear," and he argues quite reasonably that "one man's voice could not have made such a noise," therefore the singing must have been congregational, nor is he deterred by the fact which his opponents gleefully pointed out, that this congregation was singing to the praise of the Golden Calf. One of these opponents was Robert Steed, which explains why the group of malcontents with Keach sought refuge at the Bagno Church. In 1691 Steed published "An Epistle . . . concerning Singing," denouncing the practice on the following grounds. Singing by a set, stinted form is an invention of man, being of the same quality as, if not worse, than common stinted set-form prayers, or even infant sprinkling. It is artificial, and therefore alien to the free motions of the Spirit of God. We should have the true and spontaneous song, if we had more of the Holy Spirit. As for arguments drawn from the music of the Old Testament, all

that is done away in Christ. Moreover, some cannot sing, not having tunable voices, and women ought anyhow to keep silence in the churches. I think we must admire Robert Steed's ingenuity, whilst we differ from his conclusions. But the most important point to notice in this ancient and long-settled controversy is that both sides seem to us wrong-headed in their arguments. To us, hymn-singing is neither a Gospel-ordinance to be neglected at our soul's peril, nor a wicked innovation, displaying the policy of Satan; it is of practical use in worship, and that settles the matter. We have moved away from the ground of Scriptural authority in such matters to the modern ground of the evidence of religious experience. It is these great changes, often unrecognized, that do settle most of the controversies, not the particular arguments employed. The dispute about hymn-singing, and every other bone of contention, lies forgotten; but it is worth while to hunt it out from the dark corner where it lies to remind us that some of our own issues may suffer the same fate, and be settled, not by our arguments, but by the inevitable course of things, and their intrinsic worth.

(3) The third point to be illustrated is a natural extension of what has been said—the perennial conflict between organization and spirit, between the body and the soul of a religious community. There must be a bodily organization where men agree to meet in fellowship; there must be system and order and compromise wherever two or three are met in the name of the Lord. But His Spirit is always seeking to say and do more than the bodily organization can express, either in the single life, or in the social group. There will always be a certain inconsistency between the essential spiritual life of such a community, and the forms of its expression and administration, themselves necessary, yet themselves perilous to its freedom and effective utterance. This problem is with us to-day, as it was with the seventeenth century, and the lesson of its permanence and difficulty is one that may be learnt from a study of denominational history.

The church before us was by no means a disorderly group of enthusiasts; that is far from being the truth about such Puritan separatists. Indeed, they were much more rigorous, within their own horizon, than we are to-day. Their regard for order is seen in the solemn handling of church affairs, the scrupulous adherence to Scriptural rule, such as the requiring two witnesses for a reported misdemeanour, the patient endeavour by continued discussion to get unanimity of decision in matters of dispute. But I will confine my illustration of this aspect of the life—its orderliness, to the ordination of ministers and other officers, formally consummated by

the laying on of hands. I quote verbatim the account of the ordination of John Skepp in 1714. It is preceded in the book by the minutes of a meeting in which each point of procedure is discussed and settled, leaders appointed, and elders from other churches chosen to assist, and a day fixed for fasting and prayer and the ordination:

Sept. 7th., being the day appointed by the church for the solemn ordination of Brother Skepp into the pastoral office.

The church being unanimously met they proceeded as follows:

Br. Skinner and Br. Lampet being the Church's Elders and mouth for that day as by the church appointed, Mr. Skinner first began, and opening the occasion of their present meeting to the Elders (viz., Mr. Noble, Mr. Elliot, Mr. Wallen) and the rest of the spectators.

He then applied his speech to the Church to know if they persisted in their determination and resolution to call Br. Skepp to the office of a pastor, and that they would now install him into the said office.

If they did to signify the same by holding up the hand, upon which it was observed the members by that signal did unanimously agree.

Then Br. Skinner in the name of the Church asked Br. Skepp if he did accept of the Church's call, and of being chose and ordained by them into the pastoral office this day, and if he did accept of the call and charge to signify it in a few words to the Church in the presence of this auditory. Upon which Br. Skepp stood up and did in words signify his compliance with the Church's call, and in the name of God and before many witnesses take upon him the office and charge to which he was chosen.

Upon which Br. Lampet and Br. Skinner stood up, Br. Skepp being in the midst, and stretched the hands over his head, and signified thereby to the spectators that this Church did by them in this figure of the stretching forth of the hand over the head of Br. Skepp signify their joint choice and present installment of him into office, and then called upon God in prayer desiring a blessing upon their choice, first themselves by Br. Skinner, and then desired the Elders present to assist them in the further work of calling upon God and exhortation.

Upon which Br. Elliot and Br. Wallen went up and prayed for a blessing, and Br. Noble spent time in speaking from a suitable text, giving suitable instructions and exhortations.

This done Br. Skepp went up and concluding in prayer and thanksgiving dismissed the Assembly.

[This record is duly signed by nine members of the Church (perhaps all the male members present, for the Church, as we shall see, had recently passed through grave trouble), not by the visiting elders, who, it will be noticed, take no part in the laying on of hands. The pastor's authority comes wholly through the Church that calls him, not from any other body.]

A similar service to this for the ordination of a pastoral elder was held for the ordination of deacons, it being expressly stated that the laying on of hands meant no more than the lifting up of hands.]

So much for the one side of the perennial problem, showing us that even so simply organized a society as this felt bound to observe due and proper forms to express its corporate acts. On the other side, no one could accuse it of having lost the consciousness that the real life of the community was in the divine Spirit animating it. The very existence of the society sprang from faith in the converting work of the Spirit, the unseen spiritual forces which created and directed the life of the individual member, and the life of the community. The man of whose ordination we have been speaking, John Skepp, wrote one book only, published posthumously, and its title was *Divine Energy, or the Efficacious Operations of the Spirit of God upon the Soul of Man*. In this book he says, "The whole work of the church, the government of the church, and the influence of the church are all under the Spirit of God. Take away the Spirit, and what is left but a carcass? A show of religion merely" (ed. 3, 1815, p. 299). Can we then assume that with such an aim, and with such methods of government, the happy compromise had been reached, and the living soul was equipped with its adequate and responsive body? The answer writ large on the history of the eighteenth century is clear enough. The breath of the Evangelical Revival was needed to rebuke and quicken the very organizations that theoretically stood for the working of the Spirit. But we may find our answer in some degree from the document before us, an answer which also serves to show the unstable religious equilibrium of the times. Richard Claridge (b. 1649), an Oxford man, who had ministered as an Anglican priest at Peopleton in Worcestershire from 1673 to 1691, resigned his position and became a Baptist. At the time of his baptism, something occurred which he had cause to remember; "as soon as he was come out of the water, and gone into an House, his wet Clothes being yet upon him, a certain Person came into the Room, and pulling off his Hat, accosted him thus, *You are Welcome, Sir, out of one Form into another.*" (*Life*, p. 18). Claridge became a

Baptist preacher, denouncing, "Prelatical Episcopacy, Surplice, Infants sprinkling, Common-Prayer, Episcopal Ordination, Churches, Ministers and Ceremonies, as Scriptureless, Antichristian and Idolatrous" (p. 22). In 1622, duly authorized by the church at Bromsgrove, he became assistant to Robert Steed at the Bagnio. In a letter written at this time (p. 26), we may hear where the emphasis lay for him. "We may talk an Hour or two, but if Christ be not with us, by His Spirit, to dictate, bring to our remembrance, and open unto us the Scriptures, it is but an *useless, empty sound*, and an *unprofitable beating of the Air*." He remained for two years with Steed and the Bagnio Church, and then a difference of conviction arose between the two ministers as to their relation with other churches; apparently he found insufficient freedom for his message and work. He left quite honourably, and refused the invitation sent by another London Baptist church. "They had some Discourse about *Elders*, and their *Call*; about *Ministers Maintenance*, and *Note-Preaching*; he told them his opinion that a *Church's Call* was not sufficient, and that *Bargain* and *Contract*, and *Note-Preaching* were contrary to the *Holy Scriptures*" (p. 28). Here we see a man bringing a fresh eye to the situation, and finding that the body was cramping the soul amongst the Baptists. For such a man there was but one natural religious home in those days—the fellowship of the Quakers, whom we find him joining in 1697, though remaining on terms of personal friendship with Baptist leaders. He remained a Quaker till his death in 1723. His spiritual pilgrimage, Anglican, Baptist and Quaker, is typical of the times, but its interest for our purpose is his passage through this particular church. Something was wanting, when its sphere could not satisfy so sincere and earnest a spirit as his; something always will be wanting in the inevitable attempt to reconcile the body and the soul of a Christian community. The problem which the past could not solve is still with us; and the failure of the past may remind us of the need for patience and for an open mind as to methods in the task of the present.

(4) But there is a justification of the study of denominational history which goes deepest of all, and is wide enough to include all other interests. Such study shows us what human nature is, by showing us its actions and reaction under the power of great emotions and intense convictions. It does not usually make striking contributions to theology, for theology as a science will ignore all denominational barriers. But anthropology is studied best in particular examples, nor does it matter what limitations of prejudice obscure the judgment, what narrowness of arena seems to

limit the life. Stoke Poges Churchyard raises the enduring interests of human nature by its mute, inglorious Miltons just as well as Westminster Abbey—provided we can get our data. The one essential here is reality. Let the ancient record show us the man as he lived and moved, and it is always worth studying. Indeed, I think there is always something wrong with the historian, whatever his special interest, if he does not keep alive in himself, and sometimes show in his work, this ultimate interest in human nature. The reasons that make a man a Baptist or a Quaker or a Plymouth Brother need not greatly concern me, unless I am one of these myself. But I am bound to be interested in the man as a man, in his behaviour in the never-ceasing drama of human life, where I tread the boards with him. That interest underlies all these ancient records, where they are faithful and full enough, and the student of denominational history is often rewarded for the pains of research by the discovery of some forgotten story of human life. The particular example to be found in this old church-book is a painful one, and some of its details could not be made public. It is the story of the downfall of David Crosley, of which this is the only full record. He and his cousin William Mitchell had done a great evangelistic work in Yorkshire and Lancashire, and the Baptist churches that ultimately sprang from their joint labours were many. He came into prominence in the south through a sermon preached at a Presbyterian Church, when he was twenty-two. He had been staying in the house of John Strudwick (where Bunyan had died three years before), and opposite him as he sat at the dinner-table was a tapestry depicting Samson in combat with the lion he slew. This seized his imagination, and led to the sermon called "Samson a type of Christ," in the manner of the allegorical preaching of the time. A bookseller who heard it, there and then proposed to print it, and a thousand copies were sold in six months. After the death of Robert Steed in 1700, he was invited to succeed him, and was ordained at the Bagnio in January 1702-3, being then about thirty-three. His ministry was eminently successful, as we might have expected from his record. But from about 1707, rumours were in circulation that the popular minister was drinking too freely, even for that tolerant age, and that his behaviour towards women gave rise to grave suspicions. For a long time the rumours were discredited by most, who felt, as is said, that "he could not if guilty be so helped in his ministry." It is the story of Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* over again, though on a lower and coarser level. At length the church was bound to deal with it. I have been greatly impressed by the thorough

and just manner in which the leaders of the church dealt with this painful scandal. The affidavits of the witnesses are given in full; their evidence was carefully tested, and full opportunity was given to David Crosley to defend himself. He acknowledged drunkenness, and was convicted of lying in the course of the very deliberate proceedings; but he maintained to the end his innocence on the gravest features of the case. There can be little doubt however, in the mind of anyone who reads the documents, and follows the course of events, that David Crosley was guilty of immoral conduct, and that the church was fully justified in its ultimate act of excommunication, in which there was full unanimity. After prayer, there was a careful statement of the charges proved by "the Brother that was the mouth of the Church," with references to the Scriptures that bore on each point. The brother then proceeded:—

"You, the Church of Jesus Christ, having judged him guilty of these gross sins, and having also judged it not for the glory of God, nor for the honour of this Church that such a one should be continued in the communion of this Church, and after silence the Brother appointed, expressed the sentence in these words.

Therefore, we do in the name of our Lord Jesus, and in the name and authority of this Church, withdraw from our Brother David Crosley, for his disorderly walking, and we put him out of union, and Communion, of this Church, until the Lord give him repentance to the satisfaction of the Church.

The church at Tottlebank, Lancashire, of which Crosley had been minister for nine years before coming to London, refused to believe him guilty, but then they never had the evidence before them. If we needed confirmation, it would lie in the fact that similar charges were brought against him in the north again in 1719, and he was virtually excommunicated in the following year. Yet his powers as a preacher remained, and at the age of 72, he could hold an open-air audience of four thousand people. He died in 1744, bequeathing us one of those perplexing problems of human inconsistency—or human frailty. As I turn over these pages of his story, I seem to see a man temperamentally weak by the very qualities that made him effective as a popular preacher, poised in unstable moral equilibrium, and the more able to understand the struggles of other men,—till the habituation of evil thought made evil act easy, and the finer edge of moral judgment was blunted. As an older man, when the passions of youth were left behind, he seems to have won and kept the respect of others, and George Whitefield writes

a preface to the republication of his famous sermon on "Samson a type of Christ." How sharply it all reminds us that underneath all our creeds and even our convictions, there is the ultimate fact of the heart itself! Had the young man but known it, Strudwick's tapestry was a prophetic foreshadowing of his own life, for David Crosley was something of a Samson in his strength and in his weakness.

Other values of denominational history which might be illustrated from this old book I must not dwell upon—the correction of sweeping generalizations, repeated from book to book, the illumination of the general historical background of the age, the way in which some incident of the past becomes a symbol and apt expression of permanent truth, like John Robinson's famous word about the more light and truth from the Bible. But I think that the responsibility lies on all who are concerned for the study of our denominational history to convince men of the value of that study by their own use of it, in something more than a merely antiquarian interest.

H. WHEELER ROBINSON.

The Poet as Interpreter

IN the cinder heaps which the war has left behind are to be found many nuggets of precious gold by the earnest seeker. Though the book trade may have suffered, English literature has profited by the Renaissance of English poetry.

For a few years before the war there had been noticeable a quickened interest in poetry, and even though no one had arisen to rank with Tennyson and Browning, there had evidently sprung up a school of writers who were not to be the idle singers of an empty day, but voices heralding the dawn of a new day; sometimes pleading for the rights and recognition of a class of the neglected, or singing of the experiences, when men pass from darkness to light. Perhaps Masfield at times puts into narrative poetry what might well have been told in prose, and some of the moods of Patrick Macgill may unfit him for reaching the grandest heights of song; but where the music is sacrificed the intense passion becomes both arresting and magnetic, and as we listen to this navy poet, singing out the true epic of labour,