State Normal School of Colorado

English Bulletin
November 1907.

SERIES VII. NO. 5

First Term Senior English.

Generalized history of literature from the evolutionary view point, with special reference to (1) the phases of early literary expression most valuable in the teaching of children, (2) the broader significance of the great forms of literature.

LESSON THREE: SYLLABUS.

II.   Outline of the larger phases of expression before the complete dominance of individual artistry.   (See I, first syllabus.)

B.   The period of individual improvisation based on communal emotion.   (See *A,* second syllabus.)

In a sense now unfamiliar, song resounded through the whole communal life.—Gummere.

1.   The probable steps from communal toward individual production.

a.   A slight variation on the endless repetition of the horde made by an improviser withdrawn but a moment from the communal circle.

b.   Growth of the custom that each member of the horde shall make a rude improvisation on the common theme.

(I).   This contribution a simple indication of some feature of the situation suggested before in endless repetition by the horde.

c.   Acceptance of an approved addition by the horde and witness to its adoption by the shouting of the original chorus, which thus becomes the binding element.

d.   The improvised verse, when greeted with

favor, passed down as part of a growing traditional stock.

   e.   The choral song thus coming to be a braid-ing of production and reproduction, of improvisation and memory.

   f.   Gradual retreat of the choral throng, giving prominence to the individual singer.

   g.   A general gift of improvising verse ante-dating the development of a national literature (in cases where growth has been from a primitive state).

   2.   The typical form: the folk-ballad.

   a.   Relation of ballad structure to communal beginnings: the stanzas representative of individual contribution, the refrain of the common voice of the horde; the verses presenting a situation condensed and elliptical as regards content, but long-drawn-out as re-gards form, the chorus giving the emotional key-note or summary of the whole; preservation of the communal spirit in the total oblivion of individual composers and the constant variation of content on the lips of the peo-ple.   'Nothing is anybody's; everything is everybody's.'

   b.   Moments in the history of the ballad.

   (I).   Shaped in the communal period of dance and song.

   (II).   Handed down with endless variation by oral transmission.

   (A).   Repeated by mothers and nurses for the entertainment of children.

   (B).   Sung in the middle ages to the harp by wandering bards.

(C). Chanted in later times by ballad-singers at fairs, markets, ale-houses, streets corners.

(D). The name confusedly applied to street songs and other verse made by individuals for the people—and, indeed, to almost every brief form of art poetry.

(E). Modernized in language by nameless minstrels and ballad singers to suit new times and places; accommodated in detail to fit different audiences and nationalities; presented in numerous versions of the same story, with countless borrowings and exchange of stanzas, incidents, descriptions.

(F). Subject to influences from rising art poetry and influencing it in return.

(G). Printed sometimes, often in degenerate form, for the broadside press.

(H). Written down, perhaps centuries after composition; collected from old manuscripts and from the lips of the people; printed, with or without variants, in ballad books, by students and lovers of folk-poetry. (Ritson, Grundvig, Herder, Percy, Scott, Child, Roxburge Club, Ballad Society.)

(I). Found in forms, printed or manuscript, that hardly date back later than the Fourteenth century, though in origin older perhaps by hundreds of years.

(J). Exercising, especially in the Eighteenth century, a strong influence on literary poetry in favor of genius and nature and against the stereotyped art of the schools. Wordsworth's saying, of Bishop

Percy's *Reliques*, "For our own country, its poetry has been absolutely redeemed by it."

(K). Forged by earlier writers and imitated by many modern poets. (e. g. Coleridge in *The Ancient Mariner;* Arytoun in *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers;* Macaulay in *Lays of Ancient Rome;* Scott in *Jack o' Hazeldean, Proud Mazie in the Wood;* Tennyson in *The Sisters;* Rosetti in *Troy Town, Sister Helen, The White Ship;* Longfellow in *The Wreck of the Hesperus.*)

c. Characteristics of the ballads in their present form.

(I). Narrative manner.

(A). Features.—Direct plunge into the story. Presentation of the tale by hints, glimpses, salient points: the usual parts of narrative structure lacking any detailed development—the happening often inferred, the ladder almost wholly absent, the situation and conclusion frequently suggested in lyrical iteration throughout the stanzas. (Vide *Lord Randal,* Gummere, p. 168.) Abruptness of transition, without bridge from one point of the situation to another. Absence of explanation or reflection about persons or motives. Mixture of lyric, dramatic, and epic elements, the story being told sometimes in dialogue, sometimes in lyric monologue, sometimes in simple, straightforward narrative. Iteration in form of question and answer, often in triads, in epithet, in turn of expression and trick of verse (the "artless art" of this iteration having the effect of binding stanzas together or of impressing unconscious symbolism). Tragic meaning conveyed by bare simplicity,

sharp contrasts, and repeated suggestion, without sub-
jective development.

(B). Explanation of these features.—The
conditions of the first making choral and immediate.
The incidents familiar to the audience and readily sup-
plied from memory. Later, the story partly sung and
partly said, the missing links being supplied in prose.
The unconscious art of singers recognizing that, for the
imagination, the part may be greater than the whole.

(II). Verse form: simple stanzas, the oldest
being the tetrameter couplet (from which is formed, by
writing the refrain as alternate verse, the stanza of four
verses), the commonest being the "ballad measure,"
septenarius or "fourteener," in four verses of alternate
four and three iambic feet; frequent filling out of metre
by retention of the Middle English accent on the final
syllable (din-ere, mon-ey, wom-an) and its assumption
by words which never properly had it; the refrain,
which usually appears in the trimeter verses (originally
sung by the chorus and accompanied by dancing steps)
sometimes mere syllables to mark time, sometimes a
phrase without discoverable relation to the situation,
sometimes words expressing the emotional atmosphere
of the ballad; the inconsequential refrain serving in the
old ballads and in some modern imitations to give an at-
mosphere of intensified feeling or tragic foreboding to
the story.

(III). Cast of content and general spirit:
primitive flavor, without reflection or sentimentality; in-
termingling of the supernatural and marvelous; con-

junction of primitive savagery with fundamental virtue, of deeds of tragedy, violence, cruelty, revenge, with honor, courage, fidelity, devotion; everywhere grim contrasts, naked satire, underlying tragedy; virility, freshness, and sincerity of tone; impersonal and objective utterance; vigor of phrasing; rough but energetic rhythm.

       d.   Relation between the original choral ballad and the ballads in their present form.

       (I).   No continuous bridge between the individual ballad and its choral original.

       (A).   This fact accounted for by the conditions of oral transmission: "In its original and quite choral form, the ballad could no more be preserved as a poem than molten iron is preserved, as such, in the casting."

       (B).   The actual choral ballad something which "one must make up, as a composite photograph, from the best old manuscript versions and the versions of soundest oral tradition."

       (C).   The lack of continuity between original and present form putting the final test of each particular ballad on the traces it shows of primal ballad structure.

       (II).   Our ballad collection, notwithstanding lack of continuous records, furnishing evidence of choral origin.

       (A).   Inconclusive tests.—Transmission by tradition (true of the popular verse of individual singers as well as of the folk-ballad, hence certain only for ex-

clusion). Presence of "I" in the text (seldom helpful for exclusion because often due to later singers and leaving unaffected the real impersonal quality of the ballad). Simplicity or crudeness of style (use of common words in common order and absence of all figurative language insufficient as test; imperfect rhyme and rhythm a false test, the former being often apparent only and the latter always untrue of the original dance ballad). Possession of refrain (difficult of application because refrains were often omitted in printing, and because a stanza of one ballad sometimes came to be sung as refrain for a new ballad; hence proof of choral origin necessary for stanzas as well as for refrain).

(B). The convincing test: evidences of incremental repetition in the mould of the poem—the structure which consists in a "succession of verses or of stanzas, mainly in triads, which are identical save for one or two pivotal words," these incremental words serving, however slowly, to advance the situation. Examples.— *The Bonny Earl of Murray* (Gummere p. 155) stanzas 3, 4, 5; *The Twa Brothers* (p. 174), stanzas 8, 9, 10; *Mary Hamilton* (p. 159), stanzas 5, 6, and 14, 15; *Babylon*.

(1). Marks of the oldest folk-ballads: presentation of a situation (rather than a story) in dialogue couplets with incremental repetition, with or without a refrain, the latter often printed as alternate verse, making a stanza of four verses. "As a matter of mere statistics, incremental repetition is found consistently, and mostly along with the refrain, in all the ballads

which are grouped by Professor Child as oldest and nearest the primitive type." (Gummere: *The Popular Ballad*, p. 134, note.)

(III). Types of ballad structure, showing deviation from the original choral form.

(A). Ballads in which the text is little more than a progressive refrain in dialogue, e. g. *The Maid Freed from the Gallows* (Child No. 95; American version in Kittredge's one-volume edition).

(B). Ballads in which this dominant choral structure is combined with a simple, subordinate narrative, e. g. *Babylon* (Gummere, p. 188).

(C), Simple narrative ballads without refrain, e. g. *Johnie Armstrong* (Gummere, p. 127).

(1). The course of the ballad in the hands of tradition a process which can be followed from its choral beginnings to its final narrative or epical form.

(a). The tale at second hand tending to lose its dramatic conditions (dialogue, descriptive acts and their accompanying words reduced; "we" changed to "he" or "they"). Details springing up to develop, particularly, the "ladder," until the ballad situation grows into a more complete story. A brief, direct summary of the action, or epic preface, sometimes prefixed to the ballad situation.

(2). The "long, epic road" a gradual change from dominance of a situation, slow, incremental progress, foreshortened treatment of events, and preponderance of choral singing, to dominance of a story,

rapidity of narrative manner, fulness of treatment, and the coherence of smoothly flowing narrative.

(D). Ballads in which the lyric tendency has become dormant and carried the piece from the epic path toward the song; repetition being no longer of the incremental and dramatic kind, e. g. *Bessy Bell and Mary Gray* (Gummere, p. 163), *Lady Alice* (Child, 85), *Barbara Allen* (Child, 84).

(E). The combination of narrative ballads into a coherent epical poem, viz: *The Gest of Robin Hood* (Gummere, p. 1).

e. The "ballad question".

(I). Its difference from the "epic question".

(II). The two sharply contrasting views.

f. The social effects of the ballad.

(I). In primitive ballad times.

(II). In later literary times.

g. The literary worth of the folk-ballad.

(I). Not to be judged by the same tests that should be applied to art poetry.

(II). The characteristic effects of the old ballad.

3. Uses of the ballad in teaching children, particularly in the upper grades.

a. Simple work with the ballad an aid in helping the children to enter more fully into the life, interests, and literary work of Sir Walter Scott, the author best adapted to first study of the literature of individual artistry.

(I). The place of the border ballads in the

early love of Scott for border life and adventure and for collecting the songs of pipers, shepherds, and old women; the ballads which Scott liked best; his own imitations; his use of Sherwood Forest in Ivanhoe.

(A). The ballads a good link between the impersonal folk-material used in lower grades and works of individual artistry like Scott's historical novels and poems.

(II). Use of ballad structure to vary the composition work in which the early interests of Scott are vivified by leading the children to try to do the same thing for their environment that Scott did for his: attempt, in gathering local traditions, to catch in the simplest ballad forms the gist of a situation, and so to embody in rhythm (strict rhythm that may be recited in concert) what the class can work out together under the guidance of the teacher. This exercise capable of developing a sense of rhythm that passive listening or mere reciting will not secure.

b. The use of the greenwood ballads to give the picturesque and emotional side of outlawry in the Thirteenth century in England.

(I). The idealizing of life in the forest: growth of the conception of Robin Hood as a man free from tyrannous legal and social restraint, but faithful to human sympathies—his leniency, as a robber, to the poor and to the rich in trouble, his devotion to the Virgin, his respect for women, his mirth and kindliness with his followers; development of typical characters surrounding Robin Hood, who represent feeling about the

social conditions of the time—the knight, the friar, the banished men, the king of the realm as official enemy of Robin Hood.

(A). Value of the Robin Hood cycle for giving such an idea of existence in Sherwood Forest as may serve to verify the greenwood phase brought into May Day and other festivals to represent the fresh, free life out-of-doors.

c. Use of the ballads as to an introduction to poetry.

(I). Reading of good narrative ballads (such as Sir Patrick Spens, Johnie Cock, Johnie Armstrong, Kinmont Willie, with such imitations as Kipling's ballad of East and West) for associating verse with qualities that children are able to appreciate—vigor, naturalness, stirring movement—instead of with something far-off, difficult, and fine spun, like the impression likely to be made on the average child by modern subjective poetry.

(II). Laying the foundation for a liking for rhythmical language and a knowledge of simple verse forms by teaching the children to say ballads rhythmically and to try imitations of them for situations in which they are particularly interested. (Cf. 3, a, (II).)

d. Occasional use of the ballads.

(I). For sharpening the sense of a tragic situation without introducing complexities and subtleties in advance of the children's comprehension. Examples. —*Bewick and Grahame* (Gummere, p. 176) for conflict of

duties; *Edward* (Gummere, p. 169) for remorse, and revulsion from one who has led the sinner into evil.

(II).   For illuminating some old custom, superstition, primitive or historical incident.   Examples. —*Bewick and Grahame* (G. p. 176) for the old brotherhood in arms; *The Three Ravens* (G. p. 167) for the old idea of the rescue of human beings by brute friends; *Bessy Bell and Mary Gray* (G. p. 163—founded on an actual event) for bringing out the pathos of a plague. (Burns' admiration of this ballad—see Principal Shairp's Life of Burns in the American Men of Letters series, p. 75); *Babylon* for a tragic situation in outlaw life; *The Twa Brothers* (G. p. 174), first nine stanzas, used last year by teacher in second grade to help children feel the love of Ab and Oak (Stanley Waterloo: Story of Ab) notwithstanding Ab's violence upon his comrade; *King Estmere* (G. p. 270) for suggestions of Siegfried and Gunther's courting of Brunhilde; *Young Hunting* (G. p. 209) for fire-test of murderer; *The Wife of Usher's Well* (G. p. 195) and others, for belief in ghosts and supernatural events.

Readings.

Gummere: Old English Ballads.   Introduction (Good for history of the 'ballad question' and for a tenable view; Appendix I for suggestions about ballad-history in Europe; II and III for verse and style.)

Gummere: The Popular Ballad (Best all-around treatment in English.)

Henrik Ibsen: The Saga and the Ballad.   Contem-

porary Review, Sept. 1906. (Good for present conditions of folk-poetry in the North.)

Beers: History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century. Chap. VIII. Percy and the Ballads (Good for ballad revival and its influence.)

Johnson's Encyclopedia, 1893: "Ballad Poetry" by Child.

Ten Brink: History of English Poetry. Vol. I.

Courthope: History of English Poetry. Vol. I, Chap. XI. The Decay of English Minstrelsy.

Thomas Percy: Reliques of Ancient English Poetry.

Ritson: Ancient Songs and Ballads, Ed. Hazlitt. Introduction.

Ritson: Select Collection of English Songs. 3 vols. Introduction.

Walter Scott: Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border. 3 vols.

T. J. Child: English and Scottish Popular Ballads. (1882-98) in ten parts. Introduction. Bibliography in tenth part. (Best for ballad variants.)

Nimmo: Ballads.

"A Book of Old English Ballads."

All the ballads in Gummere's collection.

Questions for Aid in Preparation.

1.   What structure of ballad is nearest the original choral form?

2.   Make as good a 'definition' as you can of the folk-ballad (Gummere: *The Popular Ballad*, p. 2, 13, 75.)

3.   Give an example from the *Iliad* of the relation

between individual and communal expression: a passage which shows the seam between communal and individual feeling; an instance from the story of Cadmon of the growth of individal artistry out of more nearly communal conditions; an illustration from the rise of the Greek drama of the decreasing function of the chorus and the increasing prominence of the individual.

4.   What simile does Mr. George Meredith use for the rise of ballads?   (The Amazing Marriage, chap. 34, quoted by Gummere, *The Popular Ballad*, p. 14).

5.   Do you know any children's games in which the old dance-ballad still survives?

6.   Give the ballad convention for, —attitude of a fighting man when wounded; hopelessness of pardon; numbering things; behavior on receiving a letter; women's loss of fathers and husbands.   How does Courthope explain such conventions, as opposed to the explanation given by those who accept the choral origin of the ballad?   (Courthope: History of English Poetry—Chapter on the Decline of Minstrelsy.)

7.   Name six early customs or superstitions that you have gathered from balladry, and say in what ballad or ballads each is found.

8.   Say what each one of the three great forms of literature has retained from the choral conditions out of which it came.

9.   Analyze *Lord Randal* (G. p. 168) and *Edward* (G. p. 169) for their lyric, epic, and dramatic elements, and say what would be the narrative parts if the situation were turned into epic story.

10.   What does Gummere mean when he says that a ballad "had struck into the long epic road"?

11.   Give the steps by which a ballad of incremental repetition in dialogue might grow into a smooth narrative of epical ballad.

12.   Scan *Sir Patrick Spens*, *Lord Randall*, and *Mary Hamilton*.

13.   How many ballads (about) make what Gummere calls the "closed account" of folk-balladry?

14.   Since it is not possible to trace these ballads separately back to the communal dance, how is their genuineness supported?

15.   Name six marks of the genuine ballad, saying which is the real test.

16.   The ballad of King Estmere and the Old English poem of Widseth (Cook and Tinker: Translations from Old English Poetry, p. 3) both speak sometimes in the first person, both tell of wandering minstrels and of the courts of kings who listen to song and give guerdon of gold rings.   What is the difference in kind between them?

17.   Discuss the two chief stanza-forms of the folk-ballad.

18.   What new and illuminating use of an old figure does Gummere make in comparing the genuine folk-ballad with even the best forgeries and imitations?

19.   How could you change the figure of Fontenelle's empire of poetry (Gummere: The Popular Ballad, p. 1-2) in such a way as to make room for the folk-ballad in its right relation to the later forms?

20.   How does the "ballad question" differ from the "epic question"?   Give the two sharply contrasted views of ballad origin and name a supporter of each.

21.   Name six lovers of the folk-ballad; three good collections.

22.   Discuss the influence of the folk-ballad in the Eighteenth century.

23.   Name a dozen good ballad imitations.

24.   How should the folk-ballad be read?   Be able to read well three chosen ballads.

25.   Discuss five uses of the ballad in teaching literature in the grades.

Required Exercises.

1.   Make an abstract in outline form of the introduction to Gummere's Old English Ballads (or of one of the articles cited in the references in library).

2.   Make a ballad in which you try to present the gist and the feeling of some historical event (either well known or obscure).   Try to make the rythm exact.

3.   Make a plan for a lesson in the seventh grade, either in literature or composition, in which a ballad (or ballads) read or imitated, is used as material.