



Nine Choice Poems of Longfellow, Lowell, Macaulay, Byron, Browning and Shelley (Classic Reprint)

James Baldwin

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Excerpt from Nine Choice Poems of Longfellow, Lowell, Macaulay, Byron, Browning and Shelley

Almost all children enjoy nursery rhymes, especially if they may listen to their recital instead of being required to read them. The great majority take pleasure in reading or hearing any simple verses provided they "tell something" and have life and movement. They enjoy ballads, whether old or new, and metrical stories no matter how awkward the rhyme. They like these, not for any beauty of thought or expression, but because of the action and the variety of images which they present to the imagination. But such productions are not poetry of the highest class, - most commonly they are not poetry at all. They are simply substitutes for poetry, and as such they serve a most excellent purpose with minds that are not yet sufficiently mature to appreciate beautiful thoughts expressed in beautiful and poetic language.

Very much of the poetry that is written professedly for children, and indeed the greater part of that which is put before them in the school readers, is distasteful to them. Such poetry, although it may be of the most excellent type, fails to interest them; in fact, it is meaningless to them. In this class are included all meditative pieces, such as verses on the seasons, flowers, the sky, truth, duty, or any abstract idea. Children do not meditate, they act; although they are poets themselves, they are incapable of relishing those higher forms of poetic composition which give so much delight to their elders. Introspection is foreign to them; they crave that which is tangible and that which is replete with life.

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