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THE PEARL. A Middle English Poem in the metre of the original. By Sophie Jewett, Associate Professor of English Literature in Wellesley College. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.

Pearl has been translated by Mr. Israel Gollancz, in part by Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, by Mr. G. G. Coulton, and by Mr. C. C. Osgood. Miss Jewett's translation is the latest. Of late years *Pearl* has become so well known as to render unnecessary in this connection any special exposition of its merits and peculiarities. Criticism has long exercised its ingenuity over such questions as the identity of the poet, the exact time and place of authorship, the indebtedness of the poem to Old French models of verse, its theological teachings, the "Pearl's" relation to the poet. All this is apart from the merits of the poem itself, which, after we frankly admit the tediousness of its theological argumentation and the conventionality of many of its epithets, still remains a true poem in its very essence and a really bewitching one in its unique beauty of form. This peculiar form renders *Pearl* extremely difficult to translate. The dialect — that of the Northwest Midland country — is, to be sure, far more difficult than that of Chaucer; but this difficulty is perhaps the easiest one for the translator to overcome. It is the metrical scheme that primarily stands, and must forever stand, in the way of any satisfactory translation. *Pearl* employs in its verse-form two very diverse systems: what remains of the alliterative scheme of Old English poetry, and the intricate rhyming system of the Old French poets which Chaucer uses in certain *ballades*. To reproduce, or even adequately to represent either of these systems alone would be no easy matter. But this is not all. The stanza of *Pearl* is one of twelve lines, rhyming *abababbcbc*, with four accents to the line, with alliteration in from two to four words in each line. The number of syllables varies, for the poet of *Pearl* has anticipated the principle of accentual rhythm illustrated by Coleridge in *Christabel*. He counts by accents, not by syllables, and mingles iambic with anapæstic feet so as to produce an exquisitely light and graceful melody, but one quite incapable of being rendered into modern English. Through the difficulties of its dialect and the peculiarities of its alliteration, rhyme, and

rhythm, we are safe in saying that adequately to render *Pearl* into modern English verse, is quite impossible. Nor, perhaps, is such performance desirable. Scholars will always prefer the original; college students will certainly profit more by an attempt to appreciate the poem in all its original grace than by reading an inevitably imperfect "translation."

But, within these limitations, Miss Jewett has performed her task very pleasingly. Her version keeps the tender and pathetic tone of *Pearl*; her verse is polished and sweet; and here and there occur lines showing a true poetic feeling not altogether due to the original. Her translation is, moreover, something of a metrical *tour de force*: it is not easy to maintain three good rhymes through twelve lines of verse; to preserve a refrain consistently; to use alliteration that shall in some measure suggest the original while the translator is under the necessity of substituting modern for obsolete words. The rhymes of her translation are of course not the rhymes of *Pearl*; but what we truly miss in Miss Jewett's rendering is the delicate and exquisite rhythm resulting largely from the mingling of iambus and anapæst that gives to *Pearl* its subtle and especial charm. Miss Jewett's work, too, had perhaps better be a paraphrase than a translation; for instance, the line

"He profered me speche, that special spece,"

is rendered

"She spoke to me for my soul's peace."

Mr. Gollancz wisely recognized the difficulties we mention, and so made no attempt in his admirable translation either to preserve the original rhyme of *Pearl* or to give any substitute for these. He often succeeds, however, in preserving the original alliteration, and gives a fair idea of the strange melody of the rhythm.

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THE SPELL OF THE YUKON AND OTHER VERSES. By Robert W. Service.
Edward Stern & Co.

As records of actual experience in the West and farthest North, these pieces of verse exhibit considerable skill and are well worth reading. The "Spell," however, we must admit, is