

Selected Poetry

[The following poems are by children under 12 years of age, and are from the collection of Mr. Caldwell Cook (Principal of the Perse School, Cambridge), the English pioneer in the Play Method of teaching composition. "You can not produce poetry by direct instruction," he says, "but only induce it by creating conditions in which poetry is born."]

Waters of the Ocean

The waters of the ocean
Are sleeping in the sun,
The sands are shining yellow,
When all the work is done.

The waters of the ocean
Are tossed up high and low,
The beach is covered over
With foam as white as snow.

The ships upon the ocean
Are riding on the foam,
And when the day is over,
The evening brings them home.
—LESLIE MACALISTER.

The Wish

To live beside a Surrey wood,
To climb about the sunny hills,
And paddle in the pebbly rills,
And eat wild berries for my food,
And have a dell for my abode,
Hidden away by leafy frills;
To hear the robin's happy trills,
And all the voices of the wood,
To have a streamlet for my bath,
The sun to be my daytime fire;
To bask upon a heathery heath,
Or pick the berries from a briar;
To feel the waters round me seethe
Once more; is all that I desire.
—GEORGE RICHMOND.

The Little Grey Squirrel

A little grey squirrel lives up in a tree,
The merriest squirrel that ever could be,
He frisked and he frolicked and gambolled for glee,
With nuts for his dinner and nuts for his tea;
Never was squirrel so happy as he,
That little grey squirrel that lived in a tree.
—VERNON HART.

Into the Clouds

Sail, my pretty air balloon,
Up beside the silver moon,
Where the tall house-chimneys rise
Like fingers pointing to the skies.

In the clouds I see the towers
Of another land than ours;
With cloud children peering down
High above our smoky town.
—V. V. H.

The Way to Slumber Town

"Which is the way to Slumber Town?
Can I get there to-night?"
"Oh, come when the golden sun sinks down,
And follow my candle's light.
We will walk through the field where the poppies blow,
And climb up stairs of gold;
Up and away where the stars are aglow
With stories that never were told."
—V. V. H.

The Family Portraits

We have some ancient portraits
That hang upon the wall;
Some always look at you, but some
Won't look at you at all.

A week ago last Saturday
I was naughty, and no one knew;
But the portraits looked as if to say
"We are ashamed of you."
—JOHN WOOLLEY.

Autumn

Autumn comes in her glorious mantle of gold;
She comes silently, silently while the leaves drop off the trees
To dance around her feet in joyous welcome.
For she is the queen of all the other seasons.
Spring is gay, and summer is beautiful, and winter
Is happy; but thou, O Autumn, art best of all—
Stately and queenlike. All things do bow their heads
To thee when thou dost come, for they do know thee.
The swallow doth prepare to fly o'er the sea,
To sunny Africa so far away,
There to await the time when winter is passed.
Thou movest quickly and passest from place to place.
The leaves do lie all dead upon the ground,
The trees are bare for sorrow that thou art gone.
—CHARLES GRANT.

Prayer

We pray Thee, Lord and Father,
Our daily bread to give,
And when we are in need, O Lord,
Pity and let us live.
We pray Thee, Lord and Father,
To guard the ships at sea,
For those who are in danger, Lord,
Put all their trust in Thee.
—HOWARD THOMAS.

At the Seaside

The sand is yellow,
The sea is blue;
If you'll bathe with me
I will paddle with you.
The clouds are white,
The grass is green;
And I'll race you up
To the bathing machine.
The sun is hot,
But the waves are cool;
I'd much rather bathe
Than do lessons in school!
—LESLIE MACALISTER.

Swallows

The air is thick with swarms of swallows,
High among the clouds,
Flying all in crowds;
Up the hills and down the hollows,
Swarms of swooping, swerving swallows.
Burnishing, dark blue, darting swallows,
Sailing o'er the sea,
Flying blithe and free;
Every bird the next one follows,
Swarms of flying, floating swallows.
—GEORGE RICHMOND.

The Lady Moon

The Lady Moon up yonder
Is like a silver boat
Upon a dark blue ocean,
All silently afloat.
And when the fairies waken
They climb the moonbeams bright,
And far across the heavens
Go sailing in the night.
—V. V. H.