



# **Verse and Prose for Beginners in Reading: Selected from English and American Literature**

*Horace Elisha Scudder*

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The order of this book is in a general way from the easy to the more difficult, with an attempt, also, at an agreeable variety. The editor has purposely avoided breaking up the book into lesson portions or giving it the air of a text-book. There is no reason why children should not read books as older people read them, for pleasure, and dissociate them from a too persistent notion of tasks. It is entirely possible that some teachers may find it out of the question to lead their classes straight through this book, but there is nothing to forbid them from judicious skipping, or, what is perhaps more to the point, from helping pupils over a difficult word or phrase when it is encountered; the interest which the child takes will carry him over most hard places. It would be a capital use of the book also if teachers were to draw upon it for poems which their pupils should, in the suggestive phrase, learn by heart. To this purpose the contents are singularly well adapted; for, from the single line proverb to a poem by Wordsworth, there is such a wide range of choice that the teacher need not resort to the questionable device of giving children fragments and bits of verse and prose to commit to memory. One of the greatest services we can do the young mind is to accustom it to the perception of wholes, and whether this whole be a lyric or a narrative poem like *Evangeline*, it is almost equally important that the young reader should learn to hold it as such in his mind. To treat a poem as a mere quarry out of which a particularly smooth stone can be chipped is to misinterpret poetry. A poem is a statue, not a quarry.

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