E. E. Bradford.
Priest and Poet.
(1860-1930)

The Rev. E. E. Bradford was educated at Exeter College, Oxford. For a number of years he was a chaplain to English congregations in various countries on the Continent. At one time he was Assistant Priest at the Anglo-Catholic Church in Paris, St. George's. His travels and his contacts with the boys of many lands are mirrored in his verse.

He has now been for many years the Vicar of Nordelph. There he enjoys the confidence and respect of all types of people for his saintliness of life and his fearless defense of the love of boys.

Shy Love

Little enough say I to Jim,
Little enough says he,
Though now and then I look at him
And he at me:
But if by chance our glances meet—
My faith! I grow as red as beet!

Often I wait for Jim at school,
Often he waits for me—
With the door between us, as a rule,
I wait and he.
When at last he ventures in the street—
Good gracious! how my heart does beat!

"Only a boy," they say of him:
"Only a boy" is he?
Aye, the only boy in the world is Jim,
At least for me.
And as for girls,—I never meet
One that is fit to kiss his feet!
When I went A-Walking

When I went a-walking
In the morning fair
I met three boys a-running,
And one had golden hair;
Curly locks were they
Like little rings of light.
I thought of him all day
And I dreamed of him all night.

When I went a-walking
In the noonday glare
I met three boys a-bathing
And the form of one was fair:
Snowy white, like May,
Yet rosy 'neath the white.
I thought of him all day,
And I dreamed of him all night.

When I went a-walking
In the evening air,
I saw three boys a-coming:
Two went I know not where.
But one went not away
For that I held him tight;—
I'll work for him all day,
And dream of him all night.

Alan.

Fresh from his bath, the boy, with hollowed hands
Luxuriating in the genial heat
Before the glowing hearth a moment stands,
Flushed with its rosy light from head to feet:
And thus I see him, naked, clean and warm,
Framed by the uncurtained casement close behind,
Placed in a picture lowering with storm,
Mid myriad snow-flakes whirling in the wind.
His radiant face, illumined by the fire,
Gleams out against a dark and troubled sea:
The shore, here dark with snow, there foul with mire,
Lies all around his form yet leaves it free:
So is it with his heart, 'mid shame and sin
Unstained it glows with love's pure light within!
John Gambril Nicholson.
Schoolmaster and Poet.
(1866- )

John Gambril Nicholson was educated at Oxford. While an undergraduate he was a contributor to that ill-fated magazine in which appeared for the first time Bloxam's "Priest and the Acolyte" and Oscar Wilde's "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young", a publication which was to play so tragic a part in the trial of that unhappy man.

Nicholson presently became the English Master of the Stationers' Company's School in North London. Here he has remained ever since, quite content with his school work and boy friends. He has published three volumes of verse about boy love and two novels of boy life,—"Carrington's Duty Week" and "The Romance of a Choir Boy".

"Victor."

Just for once my Victor kissed me,—
Ah, his cheek was soft as satin!
Cynics say that Fortune's missed me,—
Just for once my Victor kissed me,
And when with the lost they list me
Let them anyway put that in!
Just for once my Victor kissed me,—
Ah, his cheek was soft as satin!
The Bather.

Clothed only in his wondrous loveliness
   He stands upon the margin of the stream,
The Summer's self were not a worthier theme
If language might but half his charms express:—
The sunlit land has donned its richest dress,
     And decked with gold the radiant meadows gleam;
But he, whose garments hid his grace supreme,
Has cast them off beneath the sun's caress.

Profit or Loss.

What if I've made a mistake?
   I have told him the naked truth!
Silent so long for his sake,
   Should I have spared his youth?
I put it all into speech,
   That's where I may have been wrong!
So hard is Love to teach
   Though I've called him mine so long.
I was dying for something more:
   Have I lost what once I had?
He was never afraid before,
   My bonny little lad!
Have I lost what once I had,
   He sleeps, but I lie awake;
My bonny little lad!
   What if I've made a mistake?
Mr. Stuart-Young as a lad claims to have attracted the attention of the author Oscar Wilde and has published a love letter he claims Wilde wrote him. He had a very unhappy childhood in a British slum and early drifted into colonial work on the West Coast of Africa. Mr. Stuart-Young has written a number of novels as well as books of verse, dealing with the Niger Country and the subject of Boy-love. A collection of his verse has been recently edited by Charles Kains-Jackson.

A Portrait of the Boy A. H. G.

A gentle youth with dark and soul-lit eyes
Where twinkling thought and fleeting fancy lies;
A calm, pale brow that shows each passing phase
Of budding beauty in a thousand ways.

Invocation.

Shy Boy, shy boy,
Shyest of your kind;
If you were of my mind
You’d not sit apart
But enter my warm heart,
Shy boy, shy boy!

Shy boy, shy boy,
Softer than a dove
Or the wings thereof,
Shy boy, shy boy,
Meet for lover’s rapture
O will you not capture
Love, love, love?

To a nude boy.

Your face is not divine; but softly wrought
Are your white shoulders which strong muscles hide.
I like you thus and am most satisfied
That you have posed as in a sculptor’s thought;—
Watching your sinuous breasts makes me distraught
In memory of the time when we defied
The indolence of flesh; and magic taught
Each to the other, and no thrill denied!
Richard Middleton.
Poet and Essayist.
(1882-1911)

Richard Middleton was educated at schools near London. He had not a very happy boyhood. At eighteen he became a clerk in an insurance office in London. His spare time was devoted to reading and to entertaining parties of young people. He wrote in his diary: “I must be content to choose my friends among children; who always see me at my best,—and what better friends do I want?”

In 1905 he became a member of the “New Bohemians” Club. Here he met Arthur Machen, Frank Harris, etc., and soon began to try his hand at literary work. In 1906 he left his father’s house and took lodgings for himself. A year later he resigned his position with the insurance firm and began to depend on his pen for an income.

Good as Middleton’s work was, it brought him only a meager livelihood. In 1908 he went to stay in Brussels because of the low cost of living there. But he became entangled in a sordid amour and had to flee to his father’s home at St. Albans in England. But dissatisfied with conditions at his father’s house he again returned to Brussels. Six weeks later he committed suicide.

So perished at the same age as Mozart, a gifted English poet. Of Middleton’s “Bathing Boy” Frank Harris said that it was “finer than Herrick, nearly as beautiful as Keats’ ‘Grecian Urn’”, —praise well deserved!

Youthful Pan.

A fair, slim Boy who darts across the brake
    Paling the morning with his silver thigh,
    Piping his soft strange music like a sigh,
To greet the world and kiss the earth awake
    And make its old heart ache
With vain regret and passionate melody!

My Love lies Hid.

My love lies hid in leafy forest pools
    That never a wind may trouble from the South,
And there amid the silences he cools
    His ivory body and his crimson mouth.
I saw a Boy, a Pretty Boy.

A fair boy grieving in the Spring
    Stayed for the procession of the years,
For the sun grew pale at his sorrowing
    And the moon-light filled his tears.
A rose lay dead upon his mouth,
    The violets dreamed about his eyes
And a wind blew out of the mad South
    And tore the timid skies.

The sad rain fell upon his face
    That was as soft as a girl's breast,
His grief sought comfort in his grace
    As a tired child its rest.
The warm wind sobbed about the earth,
    The heart of the pulsing earth was sore
Because the boy had forgotten mirth
    And so would sing no more.

Oh dear boy with the lovely head
    And the silver body of snow,
Laugh out again for the Fates are dead
    And the dead fates homeward go.
Ah, dear boy with the red lips
    And the breast as soft as a girl's,
Young love has brought a thousand ships
    And the skies are all awhirl!
The Bathing Boy.

I saw him standing on the brim
Of the quick river in his beauty clad.
So fair he was that Nature looked at him
And touched him with her sunbeams here and there
So that his cool flesh sparkled, and his hair
Blazed like a crown above the naked lad.

And so I wept; I have seen lovely things,
Maidens and stars and roses all a-nod
In moon-lit seas; but Love without his wings
Set in the azure of an August sky
Was all too fair for my mortality
And so I wept to see the little god.

Till with a sudden grace of silver skin
And golden lock he dived, his song of joy
Broke with the bubbles as he bore them in;
And lo, the fear of death was on that place
Till, decked with new-found gems and flushed of face,
He rose again, a laughing, choking boy.
Edmund John.
Schoolmaster and Poet.
(1883-1917)

Edmund John's early interests were strongly scientific, particularly in the direction of Chemistry. He finally decided however to devote his life to teaching as a profession. His biographer says "Edmund John was happiest when surrounded by a group of boys, all engrossed and fascinated by his wonderful personality. His power over boys was extraordinary and they adored him."

He never forgot a promise to a child. The cigarette cards, the stamps or the coveted specimen always came by the first available post. Very charming too were his notes to his small friends. To one he wrote from Italy.

"Bambino carissimo:—
Will you come and stay with me in Florence? No one grows up here and you can dabble your feet in the Arno!
A reverenti carino."

To another he wrote:
"I have received your adorable illustrated letter this morning and loved it so much that I immediately made an altar before it, lit by amber candles in copper candle-sticks, burnt incense before it and kissed its extreme beatifulness—"

In 1915 he gave up his school and enlisted in the "Artists' Rifles". But heart trouble developed and he was invalided out. He went to Italy in hopes of regaining his health but died there in February 1917.

His finest poem is undoubtedly "The Seven Gifts". This was written, upon sudden inspiration, on the back of a schoolboy's arithmetic examination paper. Edmund John sent it to his friend, the editor of the "English Review" with the following note:
"Ecco, here is the poem at last. I wonder if you will like it. The feeling is, I think, essentially characteristic of myself."

The Seven Gifts

I give my clear-eyed boy a star
Of clematis from summer days
That dwelt among the scented ways
Of an old garden still and far:
So that it light his dreams with truth
From that walled garden of my youth,
I give my clear-eyed boy a star.
I give my soft-haired boy a crown
Of olive from the groves of Greece,
That all life's passion turn to peace
For him, and perilous paths lead down
To clear, calm lakes beneath the moon;—
So that his brow be cool at noon,
I give my soft-haired boy a crown.

I give my red-lipped boy a rose
Fresh with the dew of waking dawn,—
A rose for my fair dancing fawn
Whose laughter all the summer knows:
Sweet, careless, unstained, fragrant boy,—
So that love bring him only joy,
I give my red-lipped boy a rose.

I give my white-skinned boy a pearl
Fair as his body and as strange
As still pools veiled in mists that change
Their mysteries as they wreath and curl:
So that his visions ever be
Wondrous and subtle as the sea,
I give my white-skinned boy a pearl.

I give my singing boy a lute
With silver strings whose chant belongs
To youth for him to sing his songs
Among the ripening flowers and fruit:
So that I hear his voice in Spring
When I lay unawakening,
I give my singing boy a lute.

I give my laughing boy a kiss
Too poor for lips so exquisite—
With curious fleeting tears in it
That glitter through a love like this:
So that he never know the pain
Of red bruised mouth bruised red in vain,
I give my laughing boy a kiss.

I give my sweet-souled boy my heart
That has been cleansed by bitter tears
Of all the fruitless weary years
With hope and sorrow set apart:
So that his pain shall pass before
Into myself and be no more,
I give my sweet-souled boy my heart.
"Philebus."
Scientist and Poet.

"Philebus" is the pseudonym of a British scientist, who has had a world-wide experience, in China, the Far East, etc. During the great war he saw service in the Mediterranean. With war work finished he made a trip to the middle of Africa with an exploration party. He has published several books of poems about boys,—"Lads-love Lyrics", "Young Things", and "Fantasies".

"Players."
To S.

I send thee cigarettes for thy delight.
Smoke my belov'd and think awhile of one
Who thinks and dreams of thee from sun to sun
Longing to have thee, lov'd one, in his sight;

To hold to his thy lissom body tight;
To press thy lips and, pressing, to surprise
Thy soul and his together in thine eyes....
If this be wrong, no love on earth is right!

Alec.

A sudden knock—"Come in" I cried
And straight the door was opened wide
And there appeared a little lad
Who, cap in hand, as if he had
Known me for years, stepped gaily in,
Looked in my eyes with witching grin
And answered my astonished "Who
On earth, my bonny boy, are you?....
"I'm Alec."

O Boy with great black mass of hair,
Deep dancing eyes beyond compare,
Sweet willing lips, entrancing smile,
And dear soft voice that can beguile
In memory my dullest days;
I pray God that you always
As trustfully will come to me
And say with soul as pure and free,
"I'm Alec."