Early

English Literature

STUDIES

IN

Early English Literature

BY

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

I DO not purpose more in this book than a general sketch of so wide a subject as Early English Literature. It is my aim to jot down some thoughts gathered from my own reading, and to breathe into them some of my love for the study of this subject. To say any thing new I cannot hope, scarce to state any thing freshly; one fears nowadays to criticise even the simplest ballad, lest some one who loved it no better, but who fortunately wrote fifty years sooner, should have said the same things about it. And yet one is always better for a breath of fresh air; and this may perhaps excuse my venturing to speak of our earlier literature.

E. W. W.

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CHAPTER I.

THE ANGLO-SAXON TIME (600–1066).

It is not as lore of the literary antiquary, nor even as a pastime for the amateur, charming as such rambles among the poets may be, but for a higher end that we prize the study of Anglo-Saxon letters. Literature is more than the bright flowerage of a time. It is the ripest fruit of its history. Its growth is the outcome of a people's whole life, from childhood to manhood.

This is especially true of the old English literature. It is a folio of many leaves, yet one book; from the "dappled dawn" of Saxon Alfred to the sunrise of Chaucer it is one long day, deepening into the full noon of Shakespeare. Each period is a phase of the great struggles of English national life: the shaping of a rough folk into a Christian people; the stormy time of the Norman Conquest ending in stronger unity; the awakening of the Reformation; the ripening of the whole past in the reign of Elizabeth. Each English writer, from Caedmon, who first sung the Creation, to Milton, from Aelfric to Jeremy Taylor, from Alfred to Burke, is a living historian of the English mind.

With this thought before us we should examine the

beginning and the growth of Anglo-Saxon letters, the true spring of our literature. We cannot understand it otherwise. For us it is its charm, that in spite of all the changes that have swept over the history of England, in spite of all the foreign elements that have gone into the body of its language; it remains to-day a Saxon speech. The Norman French and the other tongues that have given it smoothness and fulness of utterance have supplemented, not supplanted, our home-born growth.

It was for a long time the mistaken belief that the English was mainly a piece of composite architecture, and that French formed the largest and the best part of it. We smile at this theory to-day. The English we speak is three fifths Saxon, and nearly all that is strongest and best is of that stock. For this reason we must know something of the early history of that people, and of their peculiar traits of mind and character as they shaped this growth.

The Anglo-Saxon speech, like the Anglo-Saxon race, is a branch of the Teutonic stock. Other branches are the Low German, embracing the Moeso-Gothic, the old Saxon, the Dutch, and Flemish, the Frisian and other dialects about the Baltic shores; the Scandinavian, including Icelandic, Old Norse, Swedish, and Danish; and the High German, with its Old, Middle, and New forms.

We know but little of the tribes who settled in England. It is not even in our power to find any Low German dialect just answering to the Anglo-Saxon. In

many points, above all in construction, it seems nearest to the Old Frisic. This likeness is very striking in the following bit of Country Frisic of 1834, and the English translation by the Countess of Blessington:

Déad! hwat bist dou	Death! what beest thou
Tu hwaem allen bugje,	To whom all bow,
Fen de scepterde kening tade slawe ?	From the sceptered king to the slave ?
De laetste, best fréon [O. F. friond],	The last, best friend,
Om uws soárgen to eingjen,	Our cares to end,
Dyn gebiet is yn't graef.	Thine empire is in the grave.

But leaving these linguistic questions to our scholars, we are mainly in search of the Anglo-Saxon likeness and unlikeness to the character of their Teutonic fathers. It is with the great Northern stock, out of which had come the Edda, the wild Sagas, the heroic song, the mythology so utterly unlike that of the Latin races, that they are one, both in the original stamp of their mind, their social habits, and their religion.

It was a land of cloudy skies and dark forests that gave birth to the worship of Odin and Thor; to the mystic poetry of nature, unknown to the sunny growths of classic soil, that deep fancy of the life-tree Ygdrasil, the ash whose roots strike down to Hela, the giants of the race of Ymir, the bright Baldur, the type of Northern chivalry, the Loki, the dwarfs and elves, the original of the Pucks and Robin Goodfellows. In his first haunts the Saxon knew the same hero-worship of Odin, the same life of battle, and sea-wandering song. Yet there is an

unlikeness also, which has stamped itself on the different branches of the race.

The Scandinavian and the High German have kept more of the early traits of their Teutonic fathers. We see in the ideal fancy of the German, in the wonderland of his romance, in the mystical tone of his poetry, another type than that of the Dutch or the English. In the broad humor and the practical sense of Platt-Deutsch writers like Fritz Reuter, there is a singular likeness to the mind of England.

This idea of mental and moral heredity runs through these riddles of history. The German of to-day can seldom construct a novel; but in a wild story like "Undine," or the fantasies of Hoffman, he is a master. The Saxon had, with his Teutonic blood, the practical understanding, the genius for deeds more than words, which, after he had crossed the Channel, made up the mental protoplasm of his children. England's strongest elements of statesmanship, of letters, of life, have their origin in these Saxon traits.

But the most faithful picture of the Anglo-Saxon in this earlier time is still preserved for us in the fragments of three striking poems which have happily survived.

Of these, the longest, "Beowulf," is a Saga of the heroic age, worthy to be put side by side with those of Scandinavian birth. The other two are the "Scôp," or "Gleeman's Tale," and the "Fight at Finnesburg."

They should be noticed here instead of later in this

sketch, because they belong to this time only. It is true that the version of the "Beowulf" which comes down to us is later, and indeed the whole poem has been turned from a Pagan into a Christian one. Yet beneath the outward acknowledgment of the God of heaven and the church world, we feel the old Pagan spirit. We are borne back to the shores of the Baltic, and to the heroic day when life was an endless fight with wild beasts and savage men. And still the soul of Northern chivalry, the love of great deeds, the bond of friendship in arms, the song of the gleeman, and the feast, all come before us as in this old Saga. It does not show the imaginative character of the Edda. There was never with the Saxon any such epic cycle as with the Scandinavian. It is a grand torso. But it is the very image of the time and the men.

The poem tells us at its opening of the renown of the first kings of the Gar Danes, and the birth of Beowulf, offspring of Scyld. He visits Hrothgar, whose hall is laid waste by the monster Grendel, a kind of man-fiend bred in the marshes, and slays him in deadly fight. It is crowded with scenes of death, of feasting over the mead, with the speech of the warriors and the tales of their hardihood. There is a Homeric freedom only to be found in such a day. It has not the sustained flow of the Homeric line, nor the wonderful imagination of the Norse poetry; yet a sharp ringing utterance and a bright fancy are in it. We hear the clash of spears in a wild refrain to the voice of the harper.

Before reading the Saxon poetry, we should glance at its structure. It is the same as that of all the Northern verse of that time. It is made up of couplets of short lines, a dactyle and trochee without rhyme. Alliteration is the main feature of the couplet. Each first line has one or two words beginning with the same letter, and in the second line there must be at least one word repeating the letter.

Oft Scyld Scefing
Sceaþena þreatum
Monegum maegþum
Meodu setla afteah.

In this alliteration we have the rude anticipation of rhyme. It is suited to the Saxon character, like the quick, following blows of Thor's hammer. A striking proof it is of this home-born strength, that the alliterative couplet lasted through all the after-growth of Anglo-Saxon and Old English, down to the day of "Piers Plowman."

The following short but telling lines are from this old Saga. The first is a picture of the funeral of Scyld, who, after the grand manner of the Vikings, was set upon the prow of his own ship in all the pride of his golden mail, alone, without a comrade, his crown on his head, and his weapons about him, and then launched into the sea to find his own grave.

There at the hithe stood
The ring-prowed ship,
Ice girt and glad to go
The Ethelings rover.
There did they lay him
The chieftain they loved,

The brave ring bestower,
In the ship's bosom.
At the masthead the mighty

Sate with much treasure,
Gauds from all far away
Lands freely gathered,
Never a comelier
Keel have I counted.
Decked with war weapons
And weeds of the hero,
With bills and with byrnies;
Lay on his bosom
Wealth without number,
With him to wander
Into the flood's sway
Far away floating.

Stately beside him
They set the gold banner
O'er his head blazing,
Let the sea bear him
To the great sea gave him.
Gloomy their minds were
Mournful and moody,
No man might ever
Say forsooth, or the
Sages in council hall,
Lordliest heroes,
Where landed that lading.

Beowulf hears of the ravages of Grendel in the country of his Danish allies, and sets forth to aid them.

The Visit of Beowulf.

Stone paved the street was,
Showing the strait way,
To the brave comrades,
Bright shown the byrnie,
Head and hand locked;
Heavy ringed iron
Sang in their war sarks,
As they strode onward.
Then the sea weary ones
Set their broad shields down
Round and hard hammered,
Close by the house wall.
To a bench bending,
Brought they the byrnies.
In a ring stood there
Spears and stout war gear,
Gathered together
With the gray ashwood.

The Banquet.

Gay were the laughing guests,
Gladsome the greeting.
Beautiful Wealtheowe came,
Bride of King Hrothgar,
Gold crowned, she welcome gave
To the brave warriors.
Filled she the flagon
To the first of the East Danes,
Blithely she bade him cheer
At the mead banquet.
Hailed she through the hall
Youth and helmed nobles;
Poured she to every one
From the bowl precious,
Then with bright-beaded arms
To Beowulf bore it,
Smiling he seized the cup,
Singing he drained it.

Fight with the Mother of Grendel.

So with these bold words,
Went the Lord of the Weder Goths
Ocean wave held him,
The world famous warrior,
She who the flood's course.
Had for a hundred years
Harrowed, blood-thirsty,
Greedily she grasped him
In her grim clutches.
Bore him the sea wolf
Down to the bottom.
In the low ocean hall
In the pale firelight
Saw he the mere wife
Mightily struck he ;
Sang his good ringed sword
Fiercely its war song,
Grimly she grasped him
On the ground threw him.
Brandished the dagger,
Broad and brown-edged.
Had not his byrnie helped
And God the Holy.
Saw he beside him
A doughty battle bill,
Glory of warriors,
Wrought by the giants ;
Seized he the knotted hilt,
Struck in his anger,
Broke he the bony neck,
Bore through the body.
Bloody the sword was,
Bright beamed the warrior
As stands the sun on high
Shining serenely.

The Burial Mound.

For him then gathered they,
His own Goth people,
A proud burial mound,
On the earth builded,
Hung it with helmets,
War gear of heroes,
And his bright byrnie,
E'en as he bade them.
On the cold hill crest
Kindled the bale fires,
Swart from the Swedish pine
Sailed up the wood reek ;
Wildly the roaring flame
Blent with their weeping.
High and broad stood it
The mound on the hill-side,
Saw it from far and wide,
All the sea pilgrims.
In it they stored away,
Stones, jewels costly,
Treasures of great earls,
In the earth's keeping ;
Gold in the ground hid
Where it yet hideth,
Bootless to man now,
As 't was before time.
Then round the sad pile
Rode all the war beasts,
Ethelings, brave earls,
Their king bewailing ;
Dirges reciting ;
All his deeds praising,
Calling him always
King among world kings,
Of men the mildest,
Of kings the kindest,
Of his folk fondest.

The "Scôp," or "Gleeman's Tale," is a curious portrait of the learning of that rude age The bard unlocks his "word hoard," and sings the lands and great men that he has seen and heard of. Alexander and Attila are placed together, and Cæsar is King of the Greeks. He passes then to the Goths and Saxons, and the courts he has seen. "With the Israelite I was, with Hebrews and Indians, and with the Egyptians." His last lines are a good description of the "gaye science" of that day.

Thus do we wander
With our wise sayings,
We the gay gleemen
Thro' all lands going,
Southward or Northward
Glad of our song craft,
* * * *
Giving with bounty.

The "Finnesburg Fight" is a fragment, more striking than "Beowulf," to judge by the few verses left us. It begins with a speech of Fin, the Frisian prince, who sees a gleam of light in his palace, fired by the Danes at night.

Then wildly cried he,
The warrior king,
This is no dawn of East,
No flight of dragon ;
Nor burn the cressets
Bright in the broad hall,
Fierce is the flaming.
Frightened the birds sing,
Wild chirps the cricket,
But wilder the war wood,
Shield and shaft meeting.

See the moon shining,
In clouds she wanders,
Waking the woful deeds
Hates of the people ;
Rouse ye, my heroes !
Fight for your dear land,
Fight in the forefront.
* * * *
Then in the hall rose
Roar of the slaughter,
Round mighty Guthlafsson

Lay many corpses.
Sailed then the raven,
Swart and brown sallow;
In the fierce sword gleam,
Seemed it Fin's castle
Blazed altogether.
Battle I never heard,
Nobler of heroes
Fitter for mead feast.

Such are the fragments left us of the heroic Saxon age. But in the broken torso, with these thews and sinews, we can know the race.

We may now turn to its English history. It is the record of a people who dwelt in the island six hundred years, to the time of the Norman Conquest; and who became rooted in it so thoroughly as to leave hardly a trace of those they uprooted, and to plant there a civilization which at last swallowed up the Norman.

This persistent vital force of the Anglo-Saxon is the wonder of his history and his literature. We need not spend any time on the Celtic, or the Roman period, so far as English civilization is concerned. Except in the legends of the "Round Table," an epic doubtless woven in Brittany by Armoric bards, but whose soil is Britain, and a few place names still lingering on English soil, there is no point of contact between the Briton and the later civilization of England.

The Roman military sway reaches from 43 A. D. to 412. After that stern domination we find the Celtic race partly civilized, but weakened. The Anglo-Saxon invasion followed. In one century the whole country was settled by the new race. The characteristic feature of this occupation was that the Anglo-Saxons were not

military occupants like the Romans before them or the Normans afterward; they were colonists. Six hundred years of slowly growing civilization followed with their permanent settlement. It was a wild age of border feuds between the different English tribes, with the Celt in Scotland, Wales, and Southwest England, and raid on raid of Danes on the East coast.

This long period, which Milton called the history of the "battles of kites and crows," was followed by the welding of the little kingdom into one under Alfred.

From this point begins a national life and national culture. It could not begin until one speech had become dominant. Hitherto there had been the two leading dialects, the Anglian or Northumbrian, with which some Scandinavian elements were mingled, and the Saxon of the South. Besides these there were many local dialects.

Alfred was born in Berkshire, the West Saxon centre. Under his sway rose the arts of peace, schools, churches, books, trades. All the remains of the early learning have reached us in manuscripts from that time. The oldest copy of Cædmon, who was a West Angle, is later than Alfred's day. With Alfred, then, in the beginning of the ninth century, after three centuries and a half of struggle, we see the first noontide of English civilization. It was to last till the middle of the eleventh century, and then, after setting in the Norman Conquest, to rise again.

A slight idea of the language is perhaps the most

weighty of our gains from research into the Anglo-Saxon period. The study of the growth of a language is the study of the brain and heart of the people. The Anglo-Saxon is not a dead speech; it is the heart and pith of the English of to-day. Three fifths of the English we use, and those three fifths the bulk of the words of our household and social life: the words taken from the outer world of sight (as sun, moon, tree, stream), words borrowed from sound and living movement (crash, break, split, crack, shake, whirl), words of the inner world (thought, feeling, will, love, grief, good, bad, right, wrong), words of action and suffering (walk, talk, smite, draw, strike).

All these are Saxon words. Of all that are not Saxon, the larger part have come from the Norman-French, a language that has given us words to express our civilization,—words of the more courtly class, the words that describe our social life, our cookery, our dress. Our theological vocabulary is from the Latin Church; our scientific, mainly from the Greek.

Many of these alien words were of course needed, and many of them are happy additions to our language. Yet it was not from any defect in the genius of the Saxon speech, but because the incoming of the Norman held it in abeyance, that it was compelled to leave untried its own word-making gift. The Saxon, as we have seen, was a Low German speech. It has, therefore, all the elements of its mother-tongue, being strong in sound, and

given to hard consonant endings more than vowel sounds.

But the feature most to be noted is the original compounding power of the Saxon. It built, as the German so happily does, all its words out of its own one-syllabled roots. This compounding power, which gives such beauty to Greek, such variety to German, was possessed in a wonderful measure by the Saxon, and we yet have it in many words, as *whirlpool*, *thunderbolt*, *earthquake*; in others we do not see their make-up, as *a-corn*, *gospell*, *gossip*, *island* (*ed*, *water*). The loss to our language is very great. The poetry of every tongue lies in this compounding power. The German says, "star knowledge," "morning land"; we say, "astronomy," "the orient." We see this in Voss' "Homer," that master-work of translation; almost line for line it reproduces the form of the Greek. Nor is this feature less important in philosophic speech. Kant built his word-book, as Aristotle did, out of the root-words of his German tongue. This is our loss, for the Saxon had the compounding power to a degree almost unthinkable now. The root mod—"mood," for instance, is found in three verbs, six nouns, nine adjectives, one adverb. This wealth of composition still remains in such words as *eyesight*, *foresight*, *insight*; in word-endings, like *ship—worship*, *clerkship*; *hed—childhood*, *fatherhood*; *nes—business*, *kindness*; *dom—kingdom*, *Christendom*. It is lost in such prefixes, as *sib-un-sib* (*kin*), *cenning—edcenning* (*new birth*).

Again, the Saxon had a very rich inflection. Its nouns

had three inflections and four cases, each distinguished by its ending. Adjectives, pronouns, and articles had the same inflection. There was a dual number in pronouns of the first and second persons, *wit—we two, gyt—ye two.* Gender, as in German, was applied to inanimate as well as animate objects. The verbs had three conjugations, four moods, and two tenses, the present and the imperfect, all marked in the same way by inflection.

The passive voice only was formed, as now, by the help of the auxiliary. The infinitive was indicated by the termination *an* and not by the sign *to*, which belonged to the gerund, a form which we have lost, though it underlies such expressions as "this house to let," "he is to blame." They could use two negatives to strengthen the negation (nor saw never no man God). The syntax again had certain features now lost. The structure was more like the German. The words which gave the most emphasis to the idea were put first in the sentence, and the verb was held in suspense. This inversion gives much poetic force to their prose, and is a marvellous power in poetry.

These hints will give us an idea of the Saxon language. It was like the people, strong, straightforward, a hearty speech. Like the Greek and German, it had the power to grow into richer forms. It has been called a rude tongue, one that needed the amplification of the Norman French. Yet the rudeness was partly that of the age. It needed time for its own development. All languages

have been rude, Greek and German as well. If we would know the wealth that we have inherited, we should learn the Saxon. Speech and thought are more akin than we are aware of, and the study of Anglo-Saxon is the study of the intimate history of the English mind.

We must not expect to find more than the fragments of the Saxon literature before Alfred. The learning of that warlike England was in the keeping of the Christian Church; both prose and poetry naturally took the form of homily, monkish chronicle, and moral essay. Yet a few relics survive which show that the old heroic fire was not all gone out; that the gleeman still sung in the hall of the thane as in the day of Beowulf. These are the song of Athelstan's victory at Brunanburh, two pieces on the crowning and death of Edgar, and a few more fragments scattered through the dry Anglo-Saxon chronicles; they end with the death of Edward and the choosing of Harold. Most striking of all these fragments is that which describes the fall of Byrthnoth at Maldon.

The Battle of Brunanburh.

Here did King Athelstan,
Lord of the highborn earls,
Ring-giver of heroes,
He and his brother too,
Edmund the Etheling,
Earn in the battle
Fame ever lasting,
With their swords' edges.
On the fierce field lay
Five of the young kings,
Lay in still slumber;
Then fled the foe away,
Leaving behind them
Bodies uncounted,
Meat for the sallow kite,
And the swart raven,
The horny-beaked prowler;
Meat for the war hawk,
And the fell gray wolf
Ranging the forest.

* * * * * * * * *

We pass to the literary history that more fully recalls the ripe time of Alfred. The noticeable fact is that while there are some writers in Latin who claim our honor—above all, Bede,—yet even in the cloister the Anglo-Saxon kept its hold. Aldhelm and Asser were men of learning for their day. But it is perhaps proof of the national type of the English Catholic Church, as well as of the love of country, that the Latin did not prevail as in the time of Alcuin and Erigena. We have a list of very curious Anglo-Saxon works, that are the fruit of the seventh and ninth centuries. There are many versions of the Scriptures, as the Latin Psalter, with an interlined translation. The "Psalms" by Aldhelm, and the "Heptateuch" of Aelfric, Archbishop of Canterbury in the tenth century, are books remarkable as next in date to the Mœso-Gothic Gospels. There are eighty homilies by Aelfric, and several treatises on geography, medicine, and botany, that give an idea of the science of the island. And we owe to these Saxon monks the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicle*, made up of convent year-books, reaching down to 1154, and containing the sad and faithful history of the bloom and decay of their natural life.

Very curious, too, are some of the moral writings of the time, as the "Dialogue of Solomon and Saturn," and a number of quaint riddles. Even the records of charters, leases, and church laws, are of worth to show how the home-born English ruled over the land. It is often said that the Anglo-Saxon literature is dull. Yet this very

dulness presumes a comfortable civilization behind their literature. The Anglo-Saxon had not the culture, the learning, the romance of the Norman; but he had a more peaceful life at home. The earliest and best of their poetry is the "Paraphrase" of Cædmon. In it are passages of true imagination, which recall Milton so strongly, that it is hard to believe he had never read the "Paraphrase." The second part, beginning with the council of fiends held by Lucifer, is especially remarkable. The poem is long-spun, and has all the faults of the Saxon, of ellipse, inversion, and uncouth line. But it is worthy of our study.

A Description of Chaos.

Nothing created was
Save shadow of cavern;
Naught was in being,
Only the broad abyss
Deep and dim standing,
Dark to the Maker,
Empty and idle.
On it his eyes looked;
The monarch strong-hearted
Saw the sad void around
Dreadful and joyless;
Saw the drear cloud descend,
In night unending,
Under the skies above
Wan lie and wasted,
Till came the world forth
By his own word shaped,
King of all glory.

Then came the second day:
Light of the darkness
Bade Life's guardian
On the sea flood to stand,
A glad heaven building.
The waters rent he,
He, our high Ruler;
And soon he wrought
The skiey firmament;
This reared the Mighty One
Above the round earth
By his own living word,
The Lord Almighty.

Satan.

Lurid the light gleamed
Half light, half shadow;
Through the broad hall of hell,
Like the harsh thunder,

Rolled the far-piercing voice
Of the Fell Fiend king,
Calling the countless host
Of the accursed ones.
Shook the strong underworld
With his one footstep;
Parted the billows red,
As he passed over,
Satan, the Hell Lord,
Hater of holy things.

There is a rich collection of other poems of the seventh and ninth centuries. The poems of Cynewulf have much poetic worth, and that of "Judith" has much strength. The allegory of the Phœnix, the short poem on death, and the address of the departing soul to the body are quaint bits of Saxon fancy, and there are still other fragments of great value, although much, without doubt, has perished of the poetry and prose of the Saxon time in the wild storm of the Conquest.

The study of Anglo-Saxon must end with the greatest of them all, the king and writer and Christian, Alfred. It was a wonderful life, remembering all the strife of the time, the steadfast toil, the long years before he built the kingdom, and yet the love of learning, the wide knowledge seen in his writings.

All that is wise in the England of that day is gathered in Alfred. Bede's "Church History," St. Augustine's "Soliloquies" (Confessiones), Gregory the Great's "Directions to the Clergy," Orosius' "History," and Boethius' "De Consolatione," made a library in those dark days. His work was chiefly translation, yet it is so inlaid with his own thought that you feel his personality. The most valuable part of the "Orosius" is the careful report he gives of the Northland, made by his best seaman.

In the "Boethius" we listen to the wise king, as he writes the consolation given him in his own battle of life, sometimes in hearty prose, sometimes in a poetic strophe not without its charm of fancy.

"Well, O man, well! Every one of you that be free, tend to the good, and this happiness; and he that is in bondage with the fruitless love of this world, let him seek freedom. For this is the only rest of all our labors. This is the only port always calm after the storms and billows of our toil. The golden stones, the jewels of all kinds, and all the earth boasteth will not enlighten the eyes of the soul."

So oft the calm sea,
Clear as the grey glass,
Winds from the southward
Wildly are stirring;
So oft a well spring,
From the hoar cliff wending
Cool and as crystal pure,
Creeps it right gladsome,
O'er the earth streaming.
But from the stony hill
Great crags have tumbled,
And in the troubled tide
Lie they together.
Dim is the water now,
Wild the brook wanders,
Turned by the rock aside
From the true channel.
So will the cloudiness
From thy heart creeping
Sadden the sunlight
In thy soul shining,
And the true flowing thoughts
Trouble how sorely.

We have now made a rapid, but, I think, a fair judgment of the Saxon literature. Let it be remembered that the Anglo-Saxon time is to be compared with the same epoch in Continental Europe; not with the time that follows it. The Anglo-Norman had more of intellectual culture; but the Anglo-Norman time begins with

the Middle Age, the time when all Europe had its awakening in philosophy, romance, art. The Saxon period is the dark age of Europe. If we compare France and Germany during the same time with England, we shall find that the culture of the Saxon is not of an inferior type.

With the reign of Alfred, the Anglo-Saxon growth reached its first stage. Fifty years (849–901) had done much for learning, art, order. This growth continued yet another hundred and fifty years, and then sank into a long sleep. A new rising was to come. The Anglo-Saxon spirit was not to die. All that was strong in the English character, all that made the freedom, the self governed manhood of the State, much that was lasting in the mind and the speech, was the fruit of those six centuries of Saxon, but home-bred civilization; and was to outlive the Conquest, to take in new elments, and come forth in its ripe manhood.

CHAPTER II.

THE ANGLO-NORMAN TIME (1066–1500).

WE reach here the second period of English literature, the time when it received the shaping influences of Norman speech and life. It is a brilliant history. It is the opening of the Middle Age. It is the time when England first came into full knowledge of the wider world of Europe, and thus felt the two great forces which molded that age,—Feudalism and the Roman Papacy. Hitherto England's growth had been only that of an insular community. The people still kept the free ways of their Saxon ancestors, and of the Saxon church; yet England could not always remain apart from the life of Europe, it must have for its own development this blending with the civilization of the Continent. The Conquest was the bridge from the mainland to the island. We are beginning in our day fairly to read this fact, and the most valuable addition to our knowledge that has been made by recent historians is to teach us that the Conquest was a very important step in the development of England; and that it followed other steps as real although not so sudden. Already in the day of Edward the Confessor, the courtly tone, the manners and speech of Normandy

had crossed the Channel. The French language was now for three hundred years to reign at the court, in the castle of the baron, in the church, the profession of law, the schools. The Norman genius was to mold the English life into a finer form, and the English speech into a fuller beauty and grace. From this refining process the Saxon speech emerges, no longer the Saxon of Alfred's time, but greatly enlarged and enriched, and ready for a great English literature. We are to study this transition time, when all the wealth of fancy and story, of monkish chronicle, wild legend, chivalry, and song is made ready for Chaucer and Spenser. Two lines of inquiry lie before us:

1st. The changes wrought upon the language.

2d. Its literary history, especially that of the English metrical romances.

We have found in our study of the language that the English of to-day is a compound, rather than intimate grammatical fusion of the earlier speech with the Norman-French. Its grammatical base is Saxon, though many of its words are French. Recalling the chief features of the Saxon, the inflection, the harsh admixture of consonants, the word-making power, the inversion and complex shape of the sentence, let us follow the leading steps in the changes that were wrought upon it by the Conquest.

a. Many old Saxon words are now lost. This was natural. French was spoken by the gentry, Saxon only

by the peasantry and the monks of the old church. The homely words of the "lewd folk" remained. But those which pertain to the court, the banquet, dress, ornament, pleasure, literature, drove them out; as the barons seized the old lands and built their castles. Thus the whole refined vocabulary arose—garden, flower, terrace, chamber, mansion, venison, mutton, beef, veal, gentle, peasant, art, poesy, pen, lesson, reason, sentiment, memory,—an unnumbered host of words like these usurped the rights of the home-born speech.

And thus the creative power of word-making, which we have seen in the Saxon, was almost wholly lost. Englishmen, when the Norman day had gone, found the words already supplied that would have naturally grown out of the elements of their own speech.

Natural changes in the inflection of noun, verb, and adjective took place. It is wholly like the change of French and Italian from the Latin. A half-taught monk, an Englishman among Normans, in the lapse of years lost knowledge of the nicer shades of Saxon speech, and instead of the old endings used the particles. The case-inflection of nouns was indicated by prepositions—*of*, *to*, *for*, *with*, *in*. Only the genitive retained the inflection. The plural had already its later form of *s*. The adjectives lost the inflection altogether. The pronouns were docked in the same way. The dual was dropped, the only trace left to us is in *between* and *betwixt*,—"amidst two." Gender was given up in the nouns that stand for

inanimate things. This doubtless was a gain, although we lose much of the old life of the language. The definite and indefinite declension of adjectives is lost; the feminine endings of adjectives and pronouns disappear. Many final vowels are given up. The verbs lose their inflections, and they are filled out by the auxiliaries *have* and *be*. The old change of vowel in preterite and participle is supplied by the weak ending in *ed*, *wox*, *waxed*. In the syntax and prosody, too, there were changes. The French structure of the sentence, less periodic and involved, took by degrees the place of the Saxon style. This change is specially to be seen in the poetry. Rhyme, though sometimes found in Saxon before the Conquest, now becomes common, chiefly the feminine rhyme.

Such are the general features of the changes wrought by the Norman Conquest upon Anglo-Saxon speech. Of course they took place by slow degrees. It has been the aim of some of our learned Saxonists to mark the whole time from the Conquest to modern English into certain great divisions, as: 1st. The *Semi-Saxon period* from 1066 to 1250,—the time when the language was in its state of disintegration. 2d. The *Old English*, from 1250 to 1500, —the time of restoration. This, again, is divided into *Early English*, from 1250 to 1350; and *Middle English*, from 1350 to 1500,—the age of Chaucer.

We cannot separate the eras of these linguistic changes as we do the strata of different geological epochs. They

merge into each other; yet in the main the classification is borne out by the literary remains of the time. During the whole Anglo-Norman period the language of the gentry is French. The old speech lingers among the people and the monks of Saxon cloisters. To them we owe the preservation of all that is left to us of their speech.

Some of the best landmarks of the Semi-Saxon period are the "English Chronicle" to 1154; the "Ormulum," a metrical paraphrase of part of the Gospels; and Layamon's "Brut," a rhymed version of Wace's "Chronicle." It is from Geoffrey of Monmouth's "Latin History" that the French of Wace is taken, and the poet has added some Breton legends to the original Welsh story of Geoffrey. The "Brut" is the work of an English priest in Worcestershire; its date is about 1205. "There was a priest in the land," he writes of himself, "whose name was Layamon; he was son of Leovenath: May the Lord be gracious unto him! he dwelt at Earnly, a noble church on the banks of Severn, near Radstone, where he read books. It came in mind to him and in his chiefest thought that he would tell the noble deeds of England, what the men were named, and whence they came who first had English land."

It was indeed a great work. It gave a past history to the island, and though it was fictitious it formed a bond of interest between Norman and Englishman. In its 32,000 lines there are not more than fifty words of

French. But the changes we have marked in the language are found already. The old alliterative metre is kept up, and there are a few rare rhymes. Layamon is the last of the old Saxon poets, with all their rude strength and simple but telling metaphor.

King Leir and his Daughters.

Bladud hafde enne sune,
Leir was ihaten,
Efter his fader daie,
He heold þis drihliche lond,
Somed an his liue,
Sixti winter.
þe king hefde þreo dohtren
Bi his drihliche quen.
þa ældeste dohter haihte Gornoille,
þa oðer Regau,
þa þridde Cordoille,
Heo wes þa ȝungeste suster,
A wliten alre uairest;
Heo wes hire fader al swa leof
Swa his aȝene lif.

Coming a hundred years further down, we find a work which marks the beginning of *Early English.* It is Robert of Gloucester's rhymed "Chronicle," about 1280.

"Syr King," quo Merlin tho, "gif thu wolt her caste,
In the honour of hem, a werk that ever schal y laste,
To the hul of Kuldar send in Irlond,
After the noble stones that ther habbet lenge y stonde,
That the treche of geands, for a quoynte werk ther ys,
Of stones al wyth art imad, in the world such non ys.
Ne ther nys nothing that me scholde myd strength adown caste."
The king somedel to lyghe, tho he herd this tale.
"How myȝte," he seyd, "such stone so grete and so fale
Be y broȝt of so far lond?"
"Syre Kyng" quoth Merlin, "ne make noght in ydel such lyghing,
Far in the farrest stude of Afric geandes while fette,
Thike stones for medycine, and in Irlond hem sette."

But the best memorial of Saxon poetic life is from a poem by an unknown writer, toward the end of Henry the Third's reign, "The Owl and Nightingale," a long poem in rhymed couplets of eight syllables. The verse flows with wonderful ease, and displays much fine fancy; we meet with nothing like it again until we come to Chaucer.

The Owl and Nightingale.

Hule thu axest me, ho seide,
Gif ich kan ene other dede,
Bute singen in summer tide
And bringen blisse far and wide
Wi axestu of craftes mine?
Betere is min on than alle thine.
And iyst, ich telle the ware-vore
Wostu to than man war ibore?
To thare blisse of hovene-riche.
Thar ever is song and murthe iliche.
Vor the man singeth in holi chirche
And clerkes ginnath songes wriche
He riseth up to midel nighte
And singeth of the hovene lighte
And prostes upe londe singeth
Wane the liht of daie springeth
And ich hom helpe wot I mai
Ich singe mid hem niht and dai.

1230.

Lenten is come with love to toune,
With blossmen and with briddes roune,
That all this blisse bringeth.
Dayeseyes in this dales,
Notes swete of nightingales,
Vch fowl song singeth.
The throstle coc him threteth oo
Awaye is huere winter wo
When wode rove springeth.
This foules singeth ferly fele
And whyleth on huere winter wele
That all the wode singeth.

We are now at the threshold of Chaucer's time; and we may fairly sum up the changes, the gain and the loss in the development of our tongue. We have seen that the English is the Saxon in its substance, with only such modifications as came from its new growth. The words that form the body of our speech, those which describe

nature, household life, thought, feeling, and deed, are the same. Our chief elements of word-building are Saxon. The genitive and plural of nouns, the comparative and superlative of adjectives, the irregular forms of these, the inflection of pronouns, the second and third persons present and imperfect of the verb ; the preterites and participles, regular and irregular ; the auxiliaries, the irregular verbs ; the ending of adverbs, *ly ;* the articles and definitives, *a*, *an*, *the*, *that*, *these*, *those*, *many*, *few*, *one*, *none :* the prepositions and conjunctions,—all these are the old Saxon. We have no doubt lost some of its traits that we may deeply mourn. Many of the old words are gone forever. But by an interesting survival many of the archaic words are not wholly lost, but are coming back to us. Since the time of Coleridge it has been the tendency to restore them, and we are indebted to our best writers for the recovery of many of these treasures.

French authors are making systematic efforts for the rehabilitation of their old words. While gladly acknowledging that our English has gained on the whole many elements of grace and strength by the fusion, we must bear in mind that the best writers of each time are those who have most of Saxon ; nor can we wholly accept Camden's judgment, much as one may enjoy it.

" Whereas our tongue is mixed, it is no disgrace. The Italian is pleasant, but without sinewes, as a still floating water. The French delicate, but ever nice as a woman, scarce daring to open her lippes, for fear of marring her

countenance. The Spanish majesticall, but fulsome, running too much on the O, and terrible like the Divell in a play. The Dutch manlike, but withal very harsh, as one ready at every word to pick a quarrel. Now we, in borrowing, give the strength of consonant to the Italian, the full sound of words to the French, the variety of terminations to the Spanish, and the mollifying of more vowels to the Dutch; and so, like bees, we gather the honey of their good properties, and leave the dregs to themselves. And thus where substantialnesse can unite with delightfulnesse, fulnesse with finenesse, seamlinesse with portlinesse, how can the language which consisteth of these sound other than full of all sweetnesse."—*Camden's Remains, ed.*, 1623.

Let us now ask, What was the general tendency of learning in this Anglo-Norman time? It was in two main directions that the mind of the Middle Age was turned. One was the theology of the Church; the other, the romance that sprang out of feudal chivalry. Each of these had its influence in England. After the first fifty years of mental stagnation, following the Conquest, we see a fresh life beginning with Henry the Beauclerc. In the twelfth century were built the schools of Oxford. The Church created some strong thinkers and famous scholars; it was the time of the scholastic philosophy. In the latter half of the twelfth century England had the high honor of being the home of Anselm. Both he and Lanfranc were Lombards, but their life was spent

in England. In the next age, when the rationalistic school of Abelard came into deadly conflict with the realism of the Church, England was the birthplace of two of the most famous of those Church gladiators, Alexander de Hales, and Duns Scotus. It is proof enough that there was no lack of intellect and strength. But greater than all was a true herald of the age of science, to be in a few centuries established by his namesake. Roger Bacon was a wonder indeed in this thirteenth century. It is impossible to read his remains to-day without acknowledging that he was already master of the *principia* of the inductive philosophy. His practical sense, his earnestness in natural study, his early discoveries are the first fruits of the English growth. These names are illustrative of the national culture. Let us glance, in passing, at the monkish historians,—William of Malmesbury, Matthew Paris, and dear old Geoffrey of Monmouth, the wonderful Munchausen who in his Latin pages embalmed all the legends, and fed half the romances. His history leads us at once, and by the most pleasant of cross-roads, to the other branch of Anglo-Norman literature. In sooth there was no history then. All was romance. History was not born; yet before speaking of the romance, we should not forget one branch of the Anglo-Norman literature, of special value for the living portraiture of this fermenting time. It was a time when the monks were writing Latin poetry, and, in utter recklessness of classic rules, introducing rhyme and accent. The mediæ-

val poems were the cradle of some of the most curious and varied song-measures of modern time.

Among these Latin rhymers there were in England, at the end of the twelfth century, several who claim our notice. We care nothing now for the dull classic poem of "Joseph of Exeter," or "The 3d Crusade," the "Antiochus." But the "Mirror of Fools," by Nigel Wircker, and the "Golias" poems of Walter Mapes are indeed signs of the times. We have in them the very prelude of the Reformation. These works are the most biting satirists of the Church from pope to friar.

In the "Mirror of Fools" an ass goes through the scholastic course, takes his degree as a finished scholar, and then, after reaching the end of Church learning, returns gladly to his old asinine form.

But even this is outdone by the humor of Mapes. It is marvellous with what a lash he flogs the Church; and his mastery of the Latin rhymes is a remarkable feat.

Est Leo pontifex summus, qui devorat;
Qui libras sitiens libros impignorat;
Marcam respiciens, Marcum dedecorat;
In summis navigans, in nummis anchorat.

Est aquila, quæ sic alis innititur;
Archidiaconus, qui praedo dicitur;
Qui videt a longe prædam quam sequitur
Et cum circumvolat ex rapto vivitur.

Omnis a clericis fluit enormitas!
Cum Deo debeant mentes sollicitas,
Tractant negotia mercesque vetitas.
Et rerum turpium vices indebitas.

Dialogus inter Corpus et Animam.

Ego quæ tam nobilis fueram creata,
Ad similitudinem Domini formata,
Et ab omni crimine baptismo mundata,
Iterum criminibus sic cum denigrata
Per te, caro misera, sumque reprobata,
Vere possum dicere, heu, quod fui nata!
Utinam ex utero fuissam translata
Protinus ad tumulum! et sic liberata
A pœna tartarea mihi jam parata.

Let us turn now to the romances; there are the mind, the manners, the fantastic life of the Middle Age. The feudal period has reached its bloom. The crusades were the awakening of all Europe; and for the first time it had drunk deep of the knowledge of the wonderland of the East. It was intoxication,—this incoming flood of wild legend, of Arabian and Moorish fancies, of strange stories of Greece and Rome, giant and Paynim and enchanter, —the most grotesque medley in the world. It was out of the whirlpool of history and fable that the literature of the time was shaped.

We have many collections of the tales of that time. There is the "Gesta Romanorum," a pile of stories of Greece and Rome, where Alexander the Great appears with Aristotle, and Virgil is a great magician, mixed with parables and such legends as furnished the "Pericles of Tyre" and the "Merchant of Venice."

There were some Indian stories, as the "Seven Wise Masters"; and stories from the south of Europe.

Normandy was one of the chief places where these

were gathered and put into charming fabliaux, like the "Lais" of Marie of France.

But it is in the form of metrical romance that they first appeared. There are four great epic cycles into which the mass may be divided.

1st. The Norse, drawn originally from the Edda, and coming down through the "Nibelungen Lied" into a Christian and continental form.

2d. The Carlovingian, of Frank descent, whence come the legends of Roland and Charlemagne.

3d. The Spanish, whose centre is the Cid, and which is richest in Moorish story.

4th. The Round Table epic, of British growth, and shaped in Armorica.

There can be little doubt that the history of the growth of these epics is what has been claimed. The stories grew out of the early legend, were then taken up by the minstrels, and turned into song for the baronial hall and cottage.

Ministrelsy was the "gaye science." They received and enlarged these legends, and so after a time the whole was rounded into epic form. At first they were not committed to writing, but were learned by heart and repeated; at last they were converted on one hand into the popular ballad, and on the other were written down in big quartos by the prose romancer.

Such was the metrical romance of the feudal time, and we can now learn somewhat of its English history.

We have first the Round Table poem, of British birth: the scene is laid in the Cornwall which the Welsh kept so long.

Its kinship to the soil made it dear to England. Spenser breathes much of its romance into the "Faerie Queene." Tennyson has made the phantoms of the Round Table live again. Even as we have it, in the book of Sir Thomas Malory, 1432–1476, it has a rare and rich charm. It is perhaps the finest picture of chivalry: its devout faith, its strange superstition, its loose morals, and yet its grand ideal of heroism. Next to this come the English romances.

Two of the oldest, the "Littell Geste of King Horn" and the "Lay of Havelok the Dane," come from the North. In the latter the spirit and descriptions of the poem are still marked as old English work. "Havelok, the orphan child of a Danish king, is by his faithless guardian given to a fisherman named Grim, to be drowned. Grim saves the child, and flies with him to England, where he lands on the coast of Lincolnshire, and founds the town of Grimsby. An English princess is forced, by a guardian as false as that of Havelok's, to marry the fisherman's foster-child, whose royal descent is then revealed, and he wins back his father's kingdom."

The plot is simple, but the poem is full of interest as a faithful picture of the manners and customs of the time, as in the knighting of Havelok.

Hwan he hauede manrede and oth,
Taken of lef and of loth,
Ubbe dubbede him to knith,
With a swerd so swithe brith,
And the folk of all the lond,
Bitauhte him al in his hond,
The cunnriche everil del,
And made him king heylike and wel.
Hwan he was king, ther mouthe men se,
The moste ioie that mouhte be.
Buttinge with sharpe speres,
Skirming with taleuaces, that men beres,
Wrastling with laddes, putting of ston,
Harping and piping, ful god won
Leyk of mine, of hasard ok,
Romanz reding on the bok ;
Ther mouthe men here the gestes singe,
The gleymen on the tabour dinge ;
Ther mouthe men se the boles beyte,
And the bores, with hundes teyte,
Was neuere ioie more
In al this werd, than tho was thore.

Many of the romances are of French origin and are steeped in the colors of French romantic poetry, with its magic wonders, its manners and feasts and battles of chivalry. Of these is the Greek romance of "King Alisaunder"; the romances of "Florice and Blanchefleur," "Roland and Ferragus," "Sir Eglamour," "Amys and Amiloun."

Sir Isumbras.

The Sowdane sawe that lady thare,
Hym thoghte als scho an angelle ware,
That ware commene owte of hevene.
He saide : "Wille thou selle thi wyffe to me ?
And I wili gyff the golde and fee

Zaa more than thou kane nevene.
I salle the gyffe tene thowsand pownde
Of florence that bene rede and rownde
And gud robes sevene.
And scho salle be lady of alle my lande,
And alle salle bowe hir to fote and hande
And noghte withstande hir stevene."
Sir Ysambrace sayd thane schortly: "Naye,
My wyfe wille I nott selle awaye,
Bot mene me for hir slaa;
I wedded hir in Goddes laye,
To halde hir to myne endyng daye,
Zaa bothe in wele and waa."
The gold thane on his mantille thay talde,
And tille hyme-selfene thay gane it falde,
His wyefe thay tuke hym fraa;
And appone the lande thay him kaste,
And bett hym till his rybbis braste,
And made his flesche fulle blaa!

Sir Degrevant.

Lord Gode in Trynité,
Yeff home hevene ffor to se
That lovethe gamene and gle
And gestys to ffede.

Ther ffolke sitis in ffere,
Shulde mene herkene and here
Of gode that beffore hem were
That levede on arthede.

And y schalle karpe off a knyght,
That was both hardy and wygth,
Sire Degrevaunt that hend hygth,
That dowgthy was of dede.

Was nevere kyngh that he ffond,
In ffraunce ne in Englond
Mygth sette a schafft of hys hond
One a stythe stede!

* * * * *

Thrytty wyntur and mare
Thei lyvede to-gydur without care,
And sevene chyldur she hym bare.
That worthy in wede;

And sene sche dyed, y undurstond,
He seysed hys eyre with hys hond,
And went into the Holy Lond,
Hevene be hys mede!

At Port-gaff was he slone,
Ffor-justyd with a Soudone;
Thus to Gode is he gone
Thus-doughty in dede.

Lord Gode in Trinité,
Gyff hem Heven for to see,
That loves gamene and gle
And gestes to fede!

But the stories dearest to the English heart were those of British-born champions. Among them were "Guy of Warwick," and "Bevis of Hamptoun"; and, greatest of all, "Richard of the Lion Heart," the idol of the people. It is wonderful how this knight of history had grown to be the mythic hero in that time.

Bevis of Hamptoun.

This geaunt was mighty and strong,
And full thirty feet was long.
He was bristled like a sow,
A foot had he between each brow,
His lips were great, and hung aside,
His eyen were hollow, his mouth was wide.
Lothly he was to look on than,
And liker a devil than a man.
His staff was a young oak,
Hard and heavy was his stroke.
Sir Bevis wondered as him might,
And him asked what he hight.
"My name," he said, "is Ascapard,
Sir Grassey sent me hitherward."

Richard Cœur de Lion.

King Richard spake to an old man:
"Wendes home to your Soudan.
Say him it shall nought avail,
That he forbars us our vitayle,
Bread, wine, fish, flesh, salmon, and conger,
Of us none shall die of hunger,
While we may wenden to fight,
And slay the Saracens downright,
King Richard shall warrant
There is no flesh so nourrissant
Unto an English man,
Partridge, plover, heron ne swan,

Cow ne ox, sheep ne swine,
As the head of a Saracen.
There is he fat and thereto tender,
And my men be lean and slender."

Richard fights with the Soudan, eats Saracens' head, is put in a cage in Austria, and kills the lion.

King Richard, I understand,
Or he went out of Engeland,
Let him make an ax for the nones,
To break therewith the Sarazyns' bones.
The hede was wrought right wele,
Therein was twenty pound of stele,
All that he hit he all to-frapped,
The griphons away fast rapped;
And the prisoun, where he came to
With his ax he smote right thro'!

In this slight sketch I trust we have seen somewhat of the character of the whole age as it is mirrored in its literature. It is the age of new formation; all the mental and moral features of England, the old Saxon strength, the Norman chivalry, the learning of the Church, and with it the first whispers of reformation, the feudal pride and with it the glimpses of national freedom—all are here. In another century this bold satire of the monk will be heard from the pulpit of Wyclif. This Saxon freedom will wrest England from the feudal grasp. This romance will bloom in the poetry of Chaucer, and the old home-speech, the home-born manhood, enlarged and enriched by three hundred years of growth, will come forth in a ripe national life.

CHAPTER III.

EARLY BALLAD POETRY.

It may seem to many an unworthy beginning of an English literature which boasts its Milton and Shakespeare to go back to the early rhymers of the ballad day. When Dr. Johnson wrote the "Lives of English Poets," he thought it enough to herald the bright succession with Cowley and Donne. But a change has come over the spirit of criticism. It is a fact worth noting, that with the awakening in the day of Cowper and Burns of a more home-born poetry there revived also the love of old English; men dared to speak of the *golden* age of Elizabeth; the critics opened anew the rich rhymes of Spenser, Beaumont and Fletcher, Herbert and Jeremy Taylor; soon they would fain push back to Dan Chaucer, and the forgotten fathers. To-day the love of old English is renewed; and if we will call back a little of our child-like spirit, the older ballads, the fanciful romaunts of chivalry, and the "Round Table," will be as fresh for us as the recovered mosaics of Pompeii.

It is no worthless task that we undertake in this study; in the ballad literature of old England, as of other nations, we recognize the mother-speech, the fruitful germ of all that has been written.

We must understand in its full meaning the truth that the literature of all lands begins with poetry. This principle lies at the root of our studies in history and literary criticism. There is in the life of every people an age of spontaneous, fresh intellect, when first the national character develops into speech, but has not attained the ripeness of reflective thought. It has not yet any philosophic science, any well-ascertained historic annals, any refined prose, any criticism. Prose is the result of long culture. But poetry is the first natural utterance of a people. It is the child not of art, but of nature. Thus primitive history is always poetry; it exists in the shape of wild legend, of warlike and social tradition; and its scattered material is afterward collected by the more accurate annalist. Thus again, the truths of religion always begin with mythology, and the bard is at once the prophet and the minstrel. The valuable discoveries of rude science, the hints of philosophy and morals are expressed in verse. Every age, every nation has thus its poetry. The rhymer of later days may be a solitary *dilettante;* the rhymer of the first ages must be the representative of his people. The whole world would speak, but cannot, "being of slow speech and a slow tongue"; and the poet is as Aaron the Levite to Moses, "thy spokesman unto the people, and he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou to him instead of a God." But as the world grows older it passes from this state of spontaneous life to that of individual reflection; prose and poetry are severed. Poetry

becomes an art, "which was before a rage." The poet is driven out from the real world into an ideal one of his own making. The historian becomes, or seeks to become, a chronicler of facts. The philosopher banishes, as Plato did from his Republic, the mythological fancies of the first age. The moralist and the man of letters speak no longer, but write in well-compacted essays for a reading public. Primitive literature is all blended in one coloring; that of later days is grouped in severed masses, with many varieties of light and shade. The one is a single beam of white light, the other has the bands and the divided lines of the spectrum.

The fact of this necessary transition from the age of unconscious, spontaneous life to that of reflective thought, and of this poetic character of the early literature among all peoples, is one of the utmost moment to us in our study. In proportion as we have clearly grasped this principle, we shall see the significance of ballad literature. In it we may read the fresh and life-like record of the past, of religion, law, philosophy, war and peace, science and social manners. We are not idle loiterers in a garden of beauty; there is a deeper meaning lurking amidst these flowers of poesy.

"That song I heard was of a higher mood." Poetry is no lifeless thing; it is more than a jingling of words, a nice skill of metre and rhythm. "Many content themselves with admiring its delicate branches, its leaves, and blossoms, not heeding that this fair array is put forth

through roots, which run down deep into the soil of our humanity, and are watered by its nether springs. That state of society least congenial with poetry, is most unfavorable to human nature itself." Thus it is in Homer we read, not Homer merely, but the Greek mind. We need not to settle the long brawl as to the identity of Homer the man; we have there the storehouse of that ancient and beautiful world, and so do we open the scroll of old English poetry. It came from the heart of the people; it shaped and moulded the rough-hewn mass of the English mind. English literature, from the ballads of war and love, the rhymed histories, the romaunts of chivalry, down to the biting satire of Chaucer and Piers Plowman, and to the mysteries and moralities is an unbroken chain of history.

English history is dead and dry to the reader of the "standard" works. How painfully and in what forced marches we haste across the early periods, over the Heptarchy, and the wars of Briton, Saxon, and Dane! How gladly we snatch at the story of Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table! It is the love of living men that makes the romance of history dearer than the octavos of classic scholars. One ballad is worth all Hume. We had rather, with good Douglas, hear the cricket chirp than the mouse squeak. It were a curious thing to examine, philosophically, how far Romance is a better guide to historic truth than History itself. Aristotle's well-known aphorism reveals the reason of

this: "that the superiority of poetry over history consists in its possessing a higher truth and a higher seriousness." The ideal truth is always nearer than the dry chronicle.

Such is old English history. It lives in tradition and song more than in rolls of parchment; in the voices of unlettered bards more than in folios of clerkly lore, than in annals of parliaments and commerce; in the huts of peasants, in old baronial castles, in moss-grown, haunted towers; in the lowly burial-ground amidst half decayed monuments, in the wizard's cavern overhung with nightshade, in the green-wood of Robin Hood, on the hill-top amidst piping shepherds, in moonlit glens with Oberon and Puck and the dancing elves, in the hall of wassail, in knightly tournaments and rustic sport, in crowded highways, in holydays and feast days of Yule and Martinmas, at wedding, christening, and funeral; in fair and market, in kirk and theatre and hostelrie, in the lofty buskin of tragedy and the laughing step of comedy, in mass-book and song-book, among lords and ladies, squires, pages, serfs, thieves, and honest men; under the helmet of the soldier, under the hood of the monk, under the cap and bells of the jester, the palmer's scrip, and the beggar's gown; it resounds from the harp and merry pipe, the shrill tempest of war, and the chant of the cathedral. It is the living voice of living men, coming up from all corners and by-ways of their thought and feeling, their action and suffering.

But as we thus recognize in early poetry the proper expression of a primitive age, so in poetry itself we must distinguish the same process of change. Every age has its own poetry. There could not be a Homer in the day of Sophocles, or a Shakespeare in the age of Chaucer. The poetic element is always the same, but its manner is fashioned by time and place. The earliest poetry must be the ballad. It is the natural utterance of an age where there is as yet no art of words; where the poet is no literary man, no student of the æsthetic laws of beauty, the harmonies and sweet mysteries of language; where he does not write for the magazines, or print in 12mos, but sings at the court of the great and in the cottage. But when the age of reflective thought has come, when literary culture is a fixed fact, then we have the beginnings of an art in poetry; we have a Chaucer and a Wyatt, then a Spenser, a Milton, and at last a Wordsworth, a Shelley. As the philosophy of the first age was poetic; so the poetry of the later age is becoming more and more philosophical. The various divisions of the poetic art are each the outgrowth of this social culture. Epic, lyric, pastoral, didactic, dramatic poetry are gradually distinguished. Epic poetry, in the sense which we commonly give to it, is the artificial structure of an after-day. Virgil, Tasso, Milton, are poets of a highly cultivated time. They live after the heroic age has gone; their poems are constructed by plan, have a unity, not of ideas only, but of parts, and the proportions of architecture.

But Homer is not an epic poet in this sense; he lived nearer to the rude time of heroic Greece; he has no art by the Aristotelian canon; unity of idea, certainly of legend, but no more. He is a ballad-singer, the most glorious of them all; and the "Iliad" is to be classed with the "Cid," with the "Nibelungen-Lied," and with the metrical romances of England. This is the true, original *epos*, only to be found in the heroic age. If we compare Homer and Virgil, we see at once that the one speaks the living poetry of his people and time, the other compacts a beautiful historic work, to be read by Roman wits, not sung at the head of armies and at the festal board. Thus Spenser gives us an elaborate picture of the days of chivalry and romance; but his great poem is a long allegory; already the reality of that age is gone; and his knights and ladies are only spectral images that "point a moral," not flesh and blood, as they came forth in the quaint old verses of Arthur or Charlemagne. All true poetry is the birth of its age, and epic poetry can only be the utterance of an epic time. But the proper poetry of an after-day is the *lyric*, the expression of personal, individual feeling; the *pastoral*, which describes nature, and makes it an object of meditative study; the *didactic*, which has to do with refined social life, as satire, or moral sentiment; and most of all, the *dramatic*. The dramatic is the proper expression of social life, with its varied, complex relations, from the gravest to the lightest; like painting, it presents in its masses of light and

shade the infinite forces of the world. Philosophy, religion, polity, social life, individual thought and action, were all expressed in Shakespeare. Every literature has thus begun with the ballad. Greece had in Homer the greatest singer of them all. Doubtless the Roman had his ballad literature, the legendary lore, from which Livy drew the material of his history (as an early monk of Malmesbury and Geoffrey of Monmouth from the old romance). The literature of Southern Europe began with the romance and lyric verses of the Trouvère and the Troubadour; and Ariosto, like our Spenser, is the later singer, who marks the transition from the bard to the artist. The scald of Scandinavia, the gleeman of Saxony, the minstrel of later days was, like Homer, a wandering singer. His poetry was unwritten, until some Pisistratus of after-days gathered it into books. He sang as Goethe's minstrel: "Ich singe, wie der Vogel singt."

But before examining the ballad poetry now left us, we must glance briefly at that English age and its most important landmarks. It is a broad field, this of unwritten poetry. Its true introduction is in the study of the Metrical Romance which came with the influence of Norman chivalry. Our ballad poetry is to be looked on as the proper child of the Romance. Those marvellous and long-winded legends of Sir Launcelot and Gawain, which formed the entertainment of the court, passed among the people, and were broken into shorter fragments of song. It has been the theory of some that instead of the ballad

coming from the Romance, the Romance is itself derived from the old heroic ballad. After all there need be no dispute, for the two theories are not contradictory. From the time of the Anglo-Saxon to the decline of the Norman era, there were many such ballads. The minstrel and the gleeman at first could not probably retain the whole of the interminable romance narratives; and shorter narratives in ballad form were the result. Of these early ballads in that form there are few left us. When minstrelsy became an order like the Homeridæ, these fragmentary songs were recombined into the romance. Again, when the romance died out, its remains passed anew into later ballads, and became the property of the common people. We may then call the whole period to Chaucer that of ballad literature. By degrees there arose a more classic day; and the minstrel sank from the *joculator regis*, the professional singer to the buffoon, and the wandering piper, "who gave a fitt of mirth for a groat," to the crowd in country taverns; and at last, numbered among "rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars," at the close of Elizabeth's reign, he passed away. The singer was succeeded by the later ballad *writer*, and the heroic song was mingled on the printed "broad-side" with the host of "Sweet Williams," and "George Barnwells," with madrigals and ditties, and published in Garlands and like popular collections. We thus possess them now, and they yet "stir the heart as with the sound of the trumpet." But "what must be our delight compared

with that real age of ancient minstrelsy, when king, knight, lady at the festal board listened to the heroic song, as it swelled from the voice of a renowned singer, echoed by the harps of those glorious gleemen!"

The English ballad is distinctly expressive of the national character. German poetry has more of the weird and mysterious view of nature, the charm which has been caught by Uhland and Fouqué. The French is more the song of country and sentiment. The Spanish is loftier, and seldom doffs its armor. But the English is natural and homeborn; full of household love and pastoral life. of fun and frolic, as well as of the "higher mood."

We may divide the Ballad poetry yet left us into four distinct classes: 1. The heroic ballad of chivalry, such as the "Boy and Mantle," "Syr Cauline," "Child of Elle; and with them "Robin Hood." 2. The ballads of the border life, including "Chevy Chase," and the larger proportion of Sir W. Scott's minstrelsy. This is a most prolific source. It has been shewn that the ballads lingered longer across the Tweed than south of it. Its cause doubtless was, that the prosaic process of a modern civilization had not been felt there, and the songs still lived with the old manners. 3. The popular and didactic household ballad. 4. The later published ballad. Of these last I say nothing. "Edwin and Emma," "Poor Bessy," and all the sentimental effusions of higher or lower bards are poor attempts to renew the childhood of the past.

It is time here to say a word of the ballad rhyme. It would be impossible to give a full criticism of it; a few specimens must suffice. The Anglo-Saxon verse generally had four accents with alliteration,—sometimes five and six accents. Guest supposes that the early rhymed couplets of our English verse were derived from these. Rhyme, however, doubtless came from the French. The common form of rhythm was the eight syllable couplet, with four accents.

> At the bridge end stood a town
> Painted with gold and with azure.

Another form is the alternate verse.

> Richard raught him with a bar of brass,
> That he caught at the gate.

The common form of our heroic ballad has four accents.

> Now Christ thee save, thou proud portèr,
> Now Christ thee save and see.

But the common measure is often varied by the triple, in which two unaccented syllables separate the accents,

> And Scarlette he was flyinge a foote
> Faste over stocke and stone.

As to the rhythm of the later ballad it is impossible to name more than the few more common forms. Every variety of mixed rhyme is found there. The favorite ones are perhaps the tail rhyme as in "Gammer Gurton,"

or "The Nut Browne Maid," or in the Psalmetre of Archbishop Parker:

To fede my nede he will me lede
To pastures greene and fat;
He forth brought me in libertee
To waters delicate.

Others are the "Burthen," the return of the same words at the close of each stave; and the "Wheel" a return of some peculiar rhythm; the "Bob-wheel" is a short, abrupt form of this. The "Roundelay" and "Virelay" are other forms of the "Burthen"; the first the repetition of the opening couplet at the close of the stanza. Besides these there are all sorts of broken staves.

I cannot eat but little meat
My stomach is not good,
But sure I think that I can drink
With him that wears a hood,
Though I go bare, take you no care
I nothing am a colde,
I stuffte my skin so full within,
With jolly good ale and olde.

Chorus.

Backe and side go bare, go bare,
Both foot and hande go colde,
But belly, God send thee good ale ynoughe
Whether it be new or olde.

But we must pass on to the point of most interest to us, the poetic criticism of the ballad. We shall not, of course, attempt to place the rude singers of an unformed age beside the masters of art. And yet we may freely say that there are certain features of that early poetry,

which to any true scholar must always have their peculiar charm. The best proof of this is found in the frequent examples of its imitators. Burns, Campbell, Scott, and yet more, Goethe and Schiller, have written nothing that so speaks to the heart as their simple ballads. The world loves to return to its childhood. Yet it is simply impossible for our later poets to be true children. Compare any modern ballad with the original, and we see the hand of the artist. The flowers are not of nature's making, but of painted tissue paper. The ballad literature of the first age is in this respect inimitable. It is to the poetry of art as the carol of the lark to an opera. If we approach them with the canon of Aristotle in one hand, with our taste formed by æsthetic models, we cannot enjoy them. Goethe says that the innermost law of art is that we know the work of the artist from his own standpoint. Only then may we read the meaning of St. Peters, and Stonehenge. We must rid ourselves of time and place, and be Englishmen of the days of Richard and Robin Hood. The faults of the ballad, of course, are rudeness of thought and expression. Their charm is simple truth to nature. If with such a view we read them, we shall find their childlike beauty. We have space but for a passing glimpse of their features, seizing here and there a gem: as in the fine opening of "Robin Hood:"

> When shaws been sheene and shraddes full fayne,
> And leaves beth large and long,

'T is merrye walking in the fayre forest
To hear the small bride's song.

The woodweele sang, and would not cease
Sitting upon the spraye,
Soe loude, he wakened Robin Hood
In Grenewood where he lay."

The Gay Gosshawk.

The red, that 's in my true love's cheek,
Is like blood-drops on the snaw ;
The white, that is on her breast bare,
Like the down o' the white sea-maw.

And even at my love's bouer-door
There grows a flowering birk ;
And ye maun sit, and sing thereon,
As she gangs to the kirk.

Johnie of Breadislee.

There 's no bird in a' this forest
Will do as mickle for me,
As dip its wing in the wan water,
And straik it on my e'e bree.

O is there nae a bonny bird,
Can sing as I can say?—
Could flee to my mother's bower
And tell to fetch Johnie away?"

The starling flew to his mother's window stane,
It whistled and it sang ;
And aye the ower word o' the tune
Was—"Johnie tarries lang!"

Bothwick of North Berwick Law,
Wons in his Seaward Tower,—
Which looketh on to the German Sea,
A wild and lanely Bower.

The sea mew and the shrieking gull,
May sing him to his sleep,
For the wash o' the wave comes oure the top
Of Bothwick's auncient keep.

The Dæmon Lover.

" O hold your tongue of your weeping, says he,
" Of your weeping now let me be ;
I will shew you how the lilies grow
On the banks of Italy."—

" O what hills are yon, yon pleasant hills,
That the sun shines sweetly on ?"
" O yon are the hills of heaven," he said,
" Where you will never win."—

" O whaten mountain is yon," she said
" All so dreary wi' frost and snow ?"
" O yon is the mountain of hell," he cried,
Where you and I will go."

And aye she turned her round about,
Aye taller he seemed to be ;
Until that the tops o' that gallant ship
Nae taller were than he.

The clouds grew dark, and the wind grew loud,
And the levin filled her ee ;
And waesome wailed the snaw-white sprites
Upon the gurlie sea.

He strack the top-mast wi' his hand,
The foremast wi' his knee ;
And he brake that gallant ship in twain,
And sank her in the sea.

The Broom o' the Cowden-Knowes.

O the broom, and the bonny bonny broom,
And the broom of the Cowden-Knowes !
And aye sae sweet as the lassie sang,
I' the bought milking the ewes.

The hills were high on ilka side,
An' the bought i' the lirk o' the hill
And aye, as she sang her voice it rang.
Out o'er the head o' yon hill.

There is here no elaborate description of nature; no over niceness of touch, nor any artificial, vague idealizing, but honest simplicity. There is the charm of natural description in the ballad. It has been often asked whether the ancients had any appreciation of nature. The poetry of the pastoral, of description, of sentimental landscape painting is the product of a later day. It belongs to a time, when society has grown old, and man is no longer the chief object of interest; then the poet retires to solitude; he idealizes the forms of nature, he admires with a passionate morbid feeling a world untouched by the sins of society; he raves, apostrophises, and adores. But in the first age nature is but the background of poetry; man the prominent object. There is no minute science of tree and leaf and rock. There is no passionate soliloquizing of a Byron, nor sentimental idealizing of a Wordsworth. But there is natural and healthy sight, and love of outward beauty. The groves are groves, not haunts of the muses; the skies are skies, not rose color; tempest and sunshine, oak and flower, are genuine.

And so, again, in the deeper realities of human feeling, of life, there is the same reality. The modern poet has learned to philosophize about the passions; he gives you the anatomy of the human heart; he describes every

agony of love, every nicest shade of emotion from the chemical analysis of a sigh to the last stage of sentimental insanity. Each namby-pamby song is a piece of metaphysics done into rhyme. This is not nature. It may please us in some subtle forms, as a fine specimen of morbid anatomy, or as a well polished conceit, but it is not nature. There is no such method in the true madness. The lover does not hold a watch to count the beats of his pulse, or turn a Harvey to make discoveries about the circulation of his blood. The characteristic of the modern lyrist is subjectivity, of the older and truer objectivity; he simply felt, and spoke as he felt. Thus a modern poet would describe to you all the emotions from surprise to sadness, that passed through Sir Patrick's mind, the ballad singer gives you Sir Patrick himself:

> The first word that Sir Patrick read,
> Sae loud, loud laughed he;
> The neist word that Sir Patrick read,
> The tear blinded his e'e.

A Moore will give us through the voice of some forlorn fair one the most musical, most melancholy autobiography of all the moods she has gone through, from the first tremulous whisper of the heart to the last accurately measured crescendo and diminuendo of despair. But the ballad tells it in a simple picture or a natural image.

> O waly, waly up the bank,
> And waly, waly doun the brae,
> And waly, waly yon burn-side,
> Where I and my love were wont to gae

I leaned my back unto an aik,
I thocht it was a trustie tree ;
But first it bow'd, and syne it brak,
Sae my true love did lichtly me.

"O hold your hand, Lord William ! " she said,
"For your strokes are wondrous sair ;
True lovers I can get many a ane,
But a father I can never get mair."

I send him the rings from my white fingers,
The garlands off my hair ;
I send him the heart that 's in my breast ;
What would my love have mair ?

Edom O' Gordon.

O bonnie, bonnie was her mouth,
And cherry were her cheeks,
And clear, clear was her yellow hair,
Whereon the red bluid dreeps ;

Then wi' his spear he turned her owre,
O gin her face was wan !
He sayd, "Ye are the first that e'er
I wisht alive again."

He turned her owre and owre againe,
O gin her skin was whyte !
"I might have spared that bonnie face
To have been sum man's delight.

"Busk and boun, my merry men a'
For ill dooms I doe gesse ;—
I cannot luik on that bonnie face
As it lies on the grass."

Such poetry abounds in the happy touches of nature; not the *curiosa felicitas* of art. There is hardly a simple

feeling of the heart, of maternal tenderness, of joy and sadness, of penitence and remorse, but is found in these ballads. But they are touches; the master's single stroke of the brush; not a labored finish of every daisy and every rose petal.

It is true that in this ballad poety its very beauty is linked with a certain defect. There could not be that variety of thought, of weird feeling and life so characteristic of modern days; as the serf's music cannot give you the harmonies of the opera. All ballads are therefore within a narrow range of action. Love and war are the themes. The maidens go through the same adventures, escape behind the knight, are imprisoned or murdered, and rise out of their graves at midnight, and weep under a thorn. Every cavalier has the same weapons, and risks his neck in the same way. But it is still nature; simple and true to its original.

But after all, it is impossible to gain any adequate idea of the subject by such specimen bricks from the building. Indeed this is the very character of the old ballad that it is a whole. Modern poets spend their artistic labor on details, and work up passages for quotation. But here it is the totality of impression; it is action; it is life in all its natural overflowing, onward movement. You cannot stay to analyze "fayre Emmeline's" emotions, or to hear the imprisoned warrior delight himself with lofty, moral soliloquies. It is the fable without the moral—now, as formerly, to my childish thought, the best fable; as when

I read of Æsop's lambs and wolves, and birds, and lions, but forgot the conclusion, or rather drew it without its being drawn for me. This is nature. This is true art; and the last, homely lesson of criticism of the ballad is this, that he who would enjoy it must be a child again.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AGE OF CHAUCER.

THE history of English literature is in no way as attractive as the study of the men who are the flower of its life. The annals of poetry, as we read them in our antiquaries, are a heavy mass of bibliography; but when we turn to a Chaucer, a Spenser, or Ben Jonson, it is like studying the family pedigree, not in the herald's office, but in a marked group of portraits, which give in every quaint costume the features of living men. We place foremost that name, the daystar of our literature, Chaucer, to whom we may better apply the praise Cowley has written of Virgil:

> The wise,
> Whose verse *walks* highest, tho' not flies,
> Who brought green poesy to her ripest age,
> And made that art, which was a rage.

It was common in the day of past criticism, when our elder English was an unknown tongue to many, to regard Chaucer as a dull and illegible rhymer; and even Byron could say that "his celebrity lay in his antiquity"; but now our best writers agree in calling him one of the creative minds of the past. In him we have the best introduction to the language, in its great transition

time, when our English was slowly forming out of its motley material. And yet more, in him we have the mind of England, as it passed out of the romantic season of Norman chivalry to its ripe, national manhood, and drew into it all the influences, social and religious, which then began to blossom over Europe. It is necessary for us to epitomize in a few words the changes which had passed over the social life of England and gone to shape its literature. There had been as yet no age of national culture. It was slowly developing from the chaos of the Conquest. There must be first an English people.

The age of Alfred, of a proper Saxon culture, had passed away; and while the rude speech and the strong elements of character remained among the people, these had little utterance. The spirit of the Norman court gave tone to poetry, learning, and manners; but it reached no further. Social liberty lay prostrate under a mailed nobility and a despotic church. The land was torn by endless wars. No law, no freedom, no national education could bloom amidst these evils. But with the Edwards we see the coming of a real social growth, a middle class rise in London; its merchants bought their rights in Parliament; its rich guilds held at bay king and baron. Crecy taught England that her bows and bills were as strong in war as her knights in gilded mail. These changes came slowly, yet it could be seen that there was to be an English people as well as a court; a

home-born speech, thought, life, a home-born Protestant faith. It was not, however, a return to the Saxon type; it was to be that rich blending which makes the composite of modern England, and which should unite the Saxon strength with the refined beauty of the Norman. That era reaches its ripe manhood with Elizabeth, when a Shakespeare, a Bacon, a Raleigh arise. The age of Chaucer is that of its childhood.

But already before him for fifty years there are signs of this mental fermentation; and the best portrait is given in literature.

At this period the literature of England was represented almost wholly by a class of writers, the *rhyming chroniclers*, who were busy with some *rifaccimenti of* Geoffrey of Monmouth, or those quaint stories of Troy and Thebes, gotten out of mediæval Latin. The prose romance had now taken the place of the rhymed, and the living spirit of the old romance had vanished. The minstrels, who had sung at the court and in the market-place, were succeeded by the dull tribe of bookmakers, like Robert de Brunne with his "Chronykil of England," and Adam Davie with his "Life of Alisaunder." In their folios, wit and grace and passion are seen no longer, unless we except Barbour's "Bruce," which has the ring of the Round Table.

> A! freedome is a nobill thinge!
> Freedome mayes man to haiff liking;
> Freedome all solace to man gyffes;
> He levys at ese that freely levys.

Now and then in these endless books there are rare gems, like the story of Macbeth, which the genius of a Shakespeare could recreate into his mighty drama. But we read there the change of the popular mind. Other thoughts began to stir it; and the ballads of Sir Bevis and Sir Guy could no longer satisfy it.

It was the revival of the English tongue that led the way, or rather showed the ground already gained. In 1380 the Bible of Wyclif saw the light. The truths which the Reformation was to ripen were sown in the heart of the people, while as yet they had not reached the court or the university. The Bible of Wyclif is the marvel of that day. It not only opened the sealed Gospel, but it gave its truth a living, national utterance. The English tongue, which had had no pure writers since 1155, and which for three centuries had been banished from the palace, the courts of law, and the song of the minstrel, now came forth in its power. Literary men recognized its power, and in 1385 it was spoken and taught in the schools. It was no longer indeed the old Saxon, as we have seen; it had gone through many modifications. But it was at last a national tongue, fit for the uses both of the scholar and the people.

The day of chivalry had set. Literature was no longer an affair mainly of the palace, the tournament, the belted knight; it must represent London, with its new life in many forms; its merchants in their velvets and gold chains, the man of law who could speak of the rights of

the people, the "doctour of phisik,"—the scientist and sceptic of his day,—the shipman, and the jovial innkeeper. There was to come out of this a Chaucer, and "the bright consummate flower" of an Elizabethan age.

The intellectual beginning came with the dawn of the fourteenth century. It was among the people, the "lewed folk," that this mighty fermentation of thought began. The worn-out ceremonial of the Roman Church had grown tiresome, and over the whole land appeared a flood of popular ballads, dialogues, lampoons, whose burthen was the lazy monk and the luxurious prelate. Wyclif had already thundered from his pulpit at Lutterworth and in the halls of Oxford; but his learned pamphlets were too heavy for the people. Their power lay in the rude, strong literature of satire. It was the lively voice of popular Protestantism, the common-sense logic, more telling than all the theses of Oxford. Nor was it the keen rapier of a Juvenal or a Pope, but the hard, well-wielded flail in the hand of the peasant. Many of these pieces remain in the early collections; and you read in these "Reformers before the Reformation" the best history of the time. Even a century before we have a most amusing relic of this popular satire, "The Land of Cockayne."

Farre in sea by Weste Spaine
Is a land y-hate Cockayne;
Tho' Paradis be mery and brighte,
Yet Cockayne is of fairer sighte.
There is a wel faire Abbaye,
Of white monkes and of greye;
There beth bowers and halles,
And of pasties beth the walles;
Of flesh and fishe and a riche mete,
The rikefullest that men may ete;
The geese yrosted on the spit,
Flee to that Abbaye, God wot,
And gridath: geese all hot, all hot.

But the work of this time which best illustrates the English mind is the "Vision of Piers Plowman," by Langland (1362, but not completed until after 1378). In a literary view it is very notable as a specimen of the old, alliterative Saxon poetry. We see in it the proof that the Saxon yet lingered among the people, and it was chosen by its author as the best garb for his satire. It is a bold picture of that freshly-awakened religious thought. The poem is a series of visions. Asleep on Malvern Hills, the poet sees a crowd in the vast meadow beneath; on one hand is the town of Truth, on the other the dungeon of Wrong. A fair lady, "Holy Church," appears; then Lady Mede (Reward), and with her all the vices and virtues, falsehood, flattery, peace, war, faith, hope, conscience. Each *passus* is a lively quarrel between these characters; Scripture and fathers and homilies are mixed in strange medley with the bitterest scorn of the monks, the corruption of the cloister, the follies of worship. Piers the Plowman, an honest Englishman, represents the English religion of old time.

In a somer seson
Whan softe was the sonne,
I shoop me into shroudes,
As I a sheep weere.
* * * *
Ac on a May morwenynge
On Malverne Hilles
Mi bifel a ferly
Of fairye me thoghte.
* * * *
As I behield unto the east
An heigh to thesonne,
I seigh a toune on the toft,
Trichliche ymaked.
A deep dale bynethe,
A dungeon therinne.
* * * *
A fayre field full of folke
Fond I ther bitwene,
Of alle manere of men,
The meene and the riche,
Werchynge and wanderynge,
As the world asketh.
* * * *

In preeris and in penaunces
Pultur hem manye,
Alle for the loue of our Lorde,
Lyveden full streighte,
In hope to have after,
Hevyn, riche blisse.
* * * *
Pilgrymes and palmeres
Plighten hem togidere,
For to seken Saint Jame
And seintes at Rome.
They wenten forth in hire way,
With many wise tales,
And hadden leve to lyen
All hire lyfe after.
* * * *
Ther preched a pardoner,
As he a preest were,
Broughte forth a bulle
With many bishopes seeles,
And seide that hymself mighte
Assoilen hem allen
Of falsehede, of fastynge,
Of vowes ybroken.

Such was the Saxon strength that heralded Chaucer. It will give us the greater idea of his genius, when we compare the rudeness of his time. He was to be the poet, who should face this speech of the people with the grace of the Norman. But we must touch on another of the influences which shaped the age of Chaucer. In the thirteenth century, especially the latter half, the mind of continental Europe began to awake in the spring tide of a fresh literature. Italy led the way; Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio became masters of the new intellectual world. The treasures of classic poetry and philosophy were opened to eager eyes; monkish Latin, and dull legends were consigned to their dust. It is clear that the spirit of the Italian movement was felt in England. We trace in Chaucer not only the home-born thoughts of his own land, but the bloom of the continental. His scholarship was enriched and refined from these sources. There can be no doubt, as in the case of Shakespeare, that he was skilled in foreign tongues. His own books show it, and

disciples like Lydgate speak of him almost with wonder, as "master of all knowledge," and indeed you find in him legends from Boccaccio: you read Dante in these lines from the "Assembly of Foules."

> Thro' me men goe into the blissful place.
> Thro me men goe (then spake the other side)
> Unto the mortell strokes of the spear.

And you hear him confessing himself a borrower in another legend.

> Therefor Petrarch writeth
> This storie, which with high stile he enditeth.

Many of his tales are taken from the "Fabliaux." The "Romaunt of the Rose" is a translation, or rather paraphrase.

His "Troilus and Creseide" is borrowed from the "Filostrato" of Boccaccio, and his "Legend of Good Women" from Ovid's "Epistles." The "Hous of Fame" is after the new allegoric model. Even the "Canterbury Tales" are, while his own, plainly inspired by Boccaccio's idea of a gathering of story-tellers. I do not say this to take from his originality. There is no perfect originality, since the first writer published the first thought. All are borrowers and lenders. Goethe says: "Originality is the assimilative power, which takes all the materials of the time, but digests and forms them into its own life."

English literature did not become the copy of Italian. Chaucer was no Dante, and no Boccaccio, although more

like that genial improvisatore than any other; but he is a hearty home-bred Englishman.

In or about the year 1340 Geoffrey Chaucer was born. His life extends through the reign of Edward III and Richard II into that of Henry, and, beyond that of most literary men, it is mingled with the stirring action of his day.

A native of London, of good family, he was educated at Cambridge, and, perhaps, if tradition be true, he was awhile at Oxford when Wyclif, in the shade of Lutterworth, was meditating the thought so soon to shake England. He possessed in the highest sense all the culture of his time, and his genius brought him early honors (1367) at the court of Edward. As ambassador he visited the Continent; was familiar with the men of letters and the great; and probably met Petrarch, then the glory of European scholars. At home he held posts of honor. He had an office in the Custom House—an honor in that time. We are told, too, of another singular perquisite of the laureate, a "pitcher" of wine to be daily provided for him (1374).

But there is in the life of Chaucer a nobler close than these years of courtly renown. It was a life of manly action in defence of truth. We know little of the incidents of it, but we gather that the poet was the friend and favorer of that movement which with Wyclif and after him stirred the heart of England.

Not only in the riot of Wat Tyler, but on every hand

in the day of Richard II there was an uprising of English freedom against the oppression of State and Church. It broke out in London, the centre then of social movements, and probably the election of John of Northampton as Mayor was the immediate cause. Chaucer, as one of the defenders of liberty, was thrown into prison; and though in after years restored in part to honors, he seems never again to have been a courtier. His life is ennobled by this trial. No servile heart was in him; he did not prostitute his genius to be the minstrel of a despot. But to the last he remained the free, high-minded Englishman. He died in 1400, on the threshold of that next century which was to see the birth of Luther.

We have thus seen in this one mind the culture of his age, its courtly grace, its best elements of learning; and united with this, the keen eyesight of the man of the people, love of freedom, hatred of superstition, and the broadest sympathies. In such a mind England could indeed have its interpreter.

And here, before passing to Chaucer's poetry, we must consider what he did for the formation of an English language. It is of deep interest to trace even briefly the steps from the rude Anglo-Norman dialect to that rich stately "tongue which Shakespeare spake." The Saxon speech, although in the long interval, even from Edward the Confessor, it had decayed at the court, and was scorned by the Norman gentry as the *patois* of the peasant, remained in reality the speech of England. It held

in it the elements of masculine strength, the words of the house, the field, the market. By degrees the foreign tongue lost its mastery; and, as we have seen, the composite English began to be spoken and taught in the schools. But in this process it came forth by no means the original Saxon. It did not become an incorporation of French and English. The body of it was Saxon, but it became refined and enlarged by many changes, which added the dialect of the court, the castle, of fashion, and wit, and poetry. These changes must be looked on as a growth which did much to make it the vehicle of a great literature. It passed from its rude orthography, its hard versification, and took something of the mellow grace of Southern tongues, to become the English of prince and people, of the statesman, the dramatist, the historian.

We may now briefly note these changes as our Saxon scholars have traced them, although they are far from exact agreement. The Saxon chronicle of 1155 is the best standard of the pure undefiled original in its last stage. The language as it reappears in the last half of the 14th century has gone through its *first* stage of disintegration, called *semi-Saxon*, and its next stage of *early English*. It has now reached the age called *middle English*. The changes have been great. Its rude orthography has been systematized; the inflection of verb and noun quite gone. Its inversion of the syntax has been modified. Above all, many Norman words have been introduced, so that it may have seemed the Babel of con-

fused speech. It was another hundred years before the euphuism of the court could give place to the plain English of Ascham and More.

It is in this *middle English* period that Chaucer appears. He is the linguistic mirror of the time. He abounds in Anglo-Norman words to us obsolete, and with their derivatives from the classic sources, with long polysyllabic words, *melancolius*, *dominatioun*, *gentilesse*. He uses the vowel endings that are found in the poetry of the Romance languages, and that have been mostly disused by our stronger voices; and he accents the last syllable.

> This feste was, and greater of cortage,
> Than was the revel of hir mariage.
> That with gret sleight and gret difficultée.

Yet with all these Norman elements, Chaucer is a treasure-house of Saxon speech. No writer gives us with more homely ease the very talk of the stout miller, or of the smith at the anvil; and if you compare him with the Gowers or Lydgates of that age, you feel that he had far less of its pedantry. Indeed in reading him the task is not in mastering the foreign words, but the old, primitive ones now lost; an eighth of his poetry probably is obsolete Saxon. Many curious traces of this *middle English* are to be found in him. There is the original infinitive *an*, in its later form *en*.

> Him wolde he snibben sharply for the nones.

There is the original and plural *es*, retaining in poetry

its syllabic value; with the plural inflection of the adjective.

> And for our faith at Tramissene
> In *lestes thries* and ay slain his fo.

The verbal and participial terminations are frequent,

> His berd was wel begunnen for to spring,
> Armed they weren, as I have you told;
> They gloweden betwixen yelwe and gold.

Many Saxon forms are there, as, for instance, lope, corven; yaf for gave; adradde for afraid; ystrangled, ystorven for starved, etc.

We have thus in Chaucer, despite his outlandish Anglo-Norman, the writer who, more than all others, fused the language into a purer type. His grace, his flexibility, his choice of words are beyond all of his time. The chaos passed with him into the first creative day. His work was harder than that of Dante and Petrarch: they had only to make classic a most harmonious tongue; he must mingle these jarring elements into one.

He is the first great master of the lofty rhyme. It is to him, that we owe the heroic verse of ten syllables and five accents. We have indeed specimens of it in romance poetry at the close of the twelfth century, as in the mystery of the "Foolish Virgins.' Richard of Hampole in the fourteenth century, forty or fifty years before the "Canterbury Tales," wrote in this his "Stimulus Conscientiæ." But in Chaucer's age the regular romance rhyme of eight syllables and four accents, and the

"royall rhythm" of fourteen syllables, which Chapman immortalized in his "Homer," were the favorites.

> Minerva wrapt her in the robe that curiously she wove
> With glorious colours as she sate on th' azure floor of Jove.
> And wove the arms that he put on, bent to the tearful field.
> About his broad spread shoulders hung his huge and horrid shield.
>
> *Chapman.*

Chaucer saw the power of the ten syllable verse, and made it henceforth the classic. It is curious, however, to trace its destiny. Even after his day it is spoken of by Gascoyne as the *riding rhyme* (from the mounted pilgrims of the Tales) "which our Master and Father Chaucer used in his 'Canterbury Tales' and divers other delectable and light enterprises"; but he adds, that "rhythm royall is fitted for a grave discourse." At the beginning of the seventeenth century it gains new dignity; Jonson designed an epic in couplets, and Dryden established it as the "heroic verse."

But we must pass from the verse to the character of Chaucer's poetry. England has given birth to no more many-sided genius in literature. Although best known in the "Canterbury Tales," we have every form of the culture of that age in poetry, and there is no better prose till the day of More. It is curious to hear him at the close of the Tales speak of his translation of Boethius, and a few such duller works of a religious cast, as his "Consolation," and beg pardon for the light stories of love and humor

In his "Romaunt of the Rose," "Hous of Fame," "Assembly of Foules," "Flower and Leaf," we have the most exquisite type of the romantic and allegorical fancy of that day. They abound in delicate humor, in fair pictures of nature, and in the best features of that chivalric spirit of courtesy which Anglo-Norman culture could give. There are rare passages in each of them. They are only dull reading now, because we have lost the fantastic tone of that day.

But the "Canterbury Tales" are always his masterwork. They reproduce the very form in which the rich, dramatic life of society had its full expression. Precisely so the literature of Italy had its popular beginnings with the "Decameron" of Boccaccio. The story-teller was the homely nurse of the people; the inspiration was drawn no longer from the metrical romance, but from the real world, as in a later day Fielding succeeded to Richardson's stately Sir Charles Grandison. In the story all the thoughts and fancies of that motley world,—its grave moods and its jests, its shrewd criticism, its biting satire, its heresies under a pleasant mask,—all had their utterance; all the strange marvels of the day, Cathay and Prester John, dwarfs and anthropophagi, were told to open ears; all the late found treasures of classic lore, the history of "Duk Theseus," of "the enchantment of Medea and Circe," are mingled in quaint anachronism with the faces and manners of the Middle Age.

I think, however, that Chaucer was happier than Boc-

caccio in his choice of a plan. In the Italian novelist there is something inhuman in the carelessness of the laughing tellers of stories amidst the plague of Florence. In the group of pilgrims you have the very picture of English life. There is nothing even out of keeping in the religious pilgrimage to St. Thomas à Becket's shrine, for the religious pilgrims of the Middle Age were quite as much at home at the Tabard Inn in Southwark; and mine host is in his way a sound Christian man, though a coarse jester. We have all England in that gathering. All the world was imaged there, not only knights and ladies, but "men of lawes," "doctours of physik," good wives of Bath, rascal friars, indulgence-sellers, tavern-keepers, and godly parsons; the living, breathing, bargaining, swearing, drinking, quarrelling, joking, praying England.

We have here the character of Chaucer's poetry. His charm is *truth of nature*. We may distinguish him from the early ballad-writers of the Romance age. With him poetry is no longer a simple minstrelsy; it is an art. But it is art in its first, fresh stage, before it has become ideal. You have not in him, as in Spenser, a poet's fairyland of fancy, "both what they half create and what perceive," nor the gorgeous imaginings of Milton; and in this higher sphere of creative genius we cannot place him. It is the poetry of faithful, objective vision; the art of the photograph. There is, indeed, a yet higher truth of nature than this; Shakespeare is at once real and ideal; his

Macbeth and Iago are eternal types of the human heart, the deeper reality that outlives all change of costume. Chaucer only gives us the scenes, the men of his time. But there is a charm in such poetry which nothing else can give.

We may draw an illustration from every life-like page. We turn to his description of natural scenery. He is the most exquisite of landscape painters, with an eye for all that is rich in form or coloring; but it is no dainty paradise he draws, it is his own island—its graceful hills, its green hedgerows, its oaks and primroses. In a later day descriptive poetry becomes mere fancy or sentiment, and loses this simple reality. The landscape of Claude has "a light that never was on sea or land"; the shepherds and shepherdesses of Poussin are Arcadian beauties. If you look at some of our modern landscapes, you are struck with their vagueness; there are Gothic temples, and groves, and rivers, but you cannot tell whether the trees are oaks or elms, or the flowers genuine; and you find that the artist painted his bowers of beauty in his studio, with no look at nature save through his skylight. It is so with poetry. Ninetenths of descriptive, pastoral verse is this effusion of sentimentalities about nature. Chaucer is a pre-Raphaelite. There is a particularity in every scene, and it was shrewdly guessed by Pope that each was a copy of some original. Each garden is one in which he has walked; each flower is a primrose or a columbine.

And to a pleasaunt grove I gan passe,
Long er the brighte sunne up-risen was,
In which were okes greate, streight as a line,
Under the which the grasse so fresh of hewe
Was newly sprong, and an eight foot or nine
Every tree wel fro his fellow grew.
With branches brode, laden with leves newe,
That sprongen out agen the sunne-shine,
Some very red, and some a glad light grene.
On every bowgh the briddes herde I synge,
With voys of aungel in her armony,
That besyed hem her briddes forthe to bringe ;

* * * * * * * * *

A ravysshinge swetnesse,
That God, that maker ys of al and Lorde,
Ne herde never bettir, as I gesse ;
Therewith a wynde, unnethe hyt myghte lesse,
Made in the leves grene a noyse softe,
Accordant to the foulys songe on lofte.

—*Assembly of Foules.*

We are much struck by the likeness between our poet and Dante, in their fondness for the effects of light on the landscape. Chaucer's sunrises are the most glowing pictures in the language. He is an early riser, and has seen the very glories that flame in his verse.

Uproos the sonne, and uproos Emelye.

The busy larke, messager of day,
Salueth in hire song the morwe gray ;
And fyry Phebus ryseth up so bright,
That al the orient laugheth of the light,
And with his stremes dryeth in the greves
The silver dropes, hongyng on the leeves.

—*Knightes Tale.*

Ther sat I doune amonge the feire floures.
And saw the briddes crepe out of her boures,

Ther as they had rested hem al the nyght ;
They were so joyful of the dayes lyght,
That they beganne of Mayes ben ther houres.

They could that servise alle bye rote ;
Ther was also many a lovely note !
Somme songe loude as they hadde pleyned,
And somme in other maner voys yfeyned,
And somme al oute with a lowde throte.

They pruned hem, and made hem ryght gay,
And daunseden and lepten on the spray ;
And evermore two and two in fere.

—*The Cuckow and the Nightingale.*

But we see this truth of nature yet more in what is his proper field, the description of men and manners. He is no historic painter like Tasso, nor can he draw a *Raffaelle* or a *Satan* ; but he is a portrait-painter of the keenest eye and nicest hand. His heroes are flesh and blood. For him every man, as every garden, is an individual ; and there is the richest variety in his studies. Each character, from the knight to the serving-man, is completely finished. His *Franckeleyn*, his *Knight*, his *Doctor* and *Merchant*, are portraits. His *Wife of Bath* and *Prioresse* are perfect. Yet, when we turn to the coarser side and examine the sharp-cut features of the motley crowd, we see what infinite humor he has. We should know the *Reve* or the *Pardonere* if we saw them walking in Broadway. There is no slashing caricature, but each stroke tells the artist. It is Flemish painting, where you may catch the foam of the beer tumbling into the brown

jug and smell the pipes. There is coarseness enough in many of his tales, as in all of that day, when women were not readers; but it is not coarseness of heart. We can find nowhere more exquisite pictures of womanly virtue and maternal tenderness. The old story of "Griselda" has a charm that never tires. More and better: with all his shrewd humor, his biting satire, there is never a sneer at piety. He paints some lecherous or smooth rascal of a monk; but he gives you also the matchless face of the good parish priest.

In brief, he pictures human nature, English nature, as it was in the day of Richard and Henry; its graver thought and its comedy, its nobleness and its vice, its friar and its Lollard, its prince and its yeomanry.

The Country Squire.

A Frankeleyn ther was in his companye;
Whit was his berde, as is the dayesye.

* * * * * *

An househaldere, and that a gret, was he;
Seynt Julian he was in his countré.

* * * * * *

Withoute bake mete was never his hous,
Of fleissch and fissch, and that so plentyvous,
It snewed in his hous of mete and drinke,
Of alle deyntees that men cowde thynke.

* * * * * *

His table dormant in his halle alway
Stood redy covered al the longe day.

The Clerk.

A clerk ther was of Oxenford also,
That unto logik hadde longe tyme i-go,
Al-so lene was his hors as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But lokede holwe and therto soburly,
Ful thredbar was his overest courtepy,
* * * * * *
For him was lever have at his beddes heed
Twenty bookes, clothed in blak and reed,
Of Aristotil, and of his philosophie,
Then robus riche, or fithul, or sawtrie.

The Doctour of Phisik.

* * * * * *
For he was groundud in astronomye;
He kepte his pacient wondurly wel
In houres by his magik naturel.
He knew the cause of every maladye,
Were it of cold, or hete, or moyst or drie,
* * * * * *
Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
And Deiscorides, and eeke Rufus;
* * * * * *
Averrois, Damascen, and Constantyn;
Bernard, and Gatisden, and Gilbertyn.
* * * * * *
His studie was but litel on the Bible.

The Prioresse.

And sche was clept madame Englentyne.
Ful wel sche sang the servise devyne,
Entuned in hire nose ful semyly;
And Frensch sche spak ful faire and fetysly,
* * * * * *

At mete wel i-taught was sche withalle ;
Sche leet no morsel from hire lippes falle,
Ne wette hire fyngres in hire sauce deepe.
* * * * * *
But for to speken of hire conscience,
Sche was so charitable and so pitous,
Sche wolde weepe if that sche saw a mous
Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde sche, that sche fedde
With rostud fleissch, and mylk, and wastel breed.
But sore wepte sche if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smot it with a yerde smerte :
And al was conscience and tendre herte.

The Wif of Bathe.

Hire keverchefs weren ful fyne of grounde ;
I durste swere they weyghede ten pounde,
That on a Sonday were upon hire heed.
Hire hosen were of fyn scarlett reed.
Ful streyte y-teyed, and schoos ful moyste and newe.
Bold was hire face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
Sche was a worthy womman al hire lyfe,
Housbondes atte chirche dore hadde sche fyfe.

The Marchaunt.

A Marchaunt was ther with a forked berd,
In motteleye and high on hors he sat,
Uppon his heed a Flaundrisch bever hat ;
His resons he spak full solempnely,
Sownynge alway the encres of his wynning.

The Monk.

A manly man, to ben an abbot able,
Ful many a deynte hors hadde he in stable :
He yaf not of the text a pulled hen,
That seith, that hunters been noon holy men ;
What ! schulde he studie, and make himselven wood,
Uppon a book in cloystre alway to powre,

Or swynke with his handes, and laboure,
As Austyn byt? How schal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved.
I saw his sleves purfiled atte hond
With grys, and that the fynest of a lond.
His bootes souple, his hors in gret estat.
Now certainly he was a fair prelat;
He was not pale as a for-pyned goost,
A fat swan loved he best of eny roost.

The Frere.

Ful wel beloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns overal in his cuntrie,
And eek with worthy wommen of the toun:
Full sweetly herde he confessioun,
And pleasant was his absolucioun;
He was an esy man to yeve penance
Ther as he wiste to han a good pitance.

The Pardoner.

* * * * * *

That streyt was comen from the court of Rome.
His walet lay byforne him in his lappe,
Bret-ful of pardoun come from Rome al hoot.
He seide, he hadde a gobet of the sey
That Seynt Peter hadde, whan that he wente
Upon the see, til Jhesu Crist him hente.
He hadde a cros of latoun ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
And thus with feyned flaterie and japes,
He made the persoune and the people his apes.

The Persoun.

But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk
That Cristes gospel gladly wolde preche;
Wyd was his parisch, and houses fer asondur,
But he ne lafte not for reyne ne thondur,
In sikenesse ne in meschief to visite

The ferrest in his parissche, moche and lite,
He waytud after no pompe ne reverence,
Ne maked him a spiced conscience,
But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
He taught, and ferst he folwed it himselve.

We have made but a slight study of the first great poet of England; yet it may shew us that we shall prize his genius more highly the more we become acquainted with him, and that Chaucer is indeed among the chief masters of his art in any age; a healthier satirist than Pope, and without a rival in the charm of perfect truthfulness. To him more than any other, until we reach the golden age of Elizabeth, we owe the growth of English literature into its fuller strength and grace.

Although he was a scholar and a favorite of the court, he had the courage to choose the speech of the people; he led it out of its rude youth to manhood, and gave it a place among the tongues of cultured Europe. We may estimate his influence when we remember that all English poetry until the time of Surrey, just on the eve of the Elizabethan period, is little else than the imitation of Chaucer's style of thought and verse. We speak to-day the language he moulded. Poetry was to have more creative and more perfect inspiration than his, but the mind of Chaucer is the heart of oak, out of which were to be hewn the massive beams and carved the rich ornaments of the building.

But it is in a far higher rank than that of the maker of polished verse that Chaucer must be placed, when we

have thus read him by the light of English history. We are not to think of the great poet as if he were only the singer born to amuse men. It was with the truest sense of his calling that the old Saxon styled him the *scôp*, the mind that *shapes*; and that not merely a world of imagination, but the mighty thoughts, the faith and hope of the world of men in which they live. An age of *dilletanteism* may have its scholars and elegant verse-makers. But it is during great periods of social movement that the great poets have been born; and in every such time it has been ideal minds, an Æschylus, a Dante, a Milton, who stood foremost as the prophets of their generation. Literature has no feature so noble as this, that its men of genius have been so often the champions of freedom, of human right, of social good. And it was especially so in this day of our English poet. We think of the Reformation as the work of Luther and of Wyclif before him; but it was Dante in the heart of a corrupt Italy who spoke with indignant tones of Pontiff and Church; it was Petrarch who shared the love of freedom with Savonarola, and Chaucer whose verse helped on the cause of a purer faith in his own land, as truly as the preacher of Lutterworth. We have already noticed some incidents in his life which prove that he was on the side of the "Reformers before the Reformation," as they are well called; of the earnest souls of that mediæval church that already hailed the coming of the day. But whether he was in direct union with the Lollards, as has been claimed, his

poems are enough to shew that his influence was on the conscience and life of his time. It was not merely the doctor of theology in his theses before the university, it was this keen painter, who held up the picture of the obscene monk, or the worldly prelate by the side of the honest parson, and taught the people to fear God and hate hypocrisy, to whom England owed that education of the national mind without which the work of Cranmer and Ridley would have been in vain. An age when merchant and scholar read "The Canterbury Tales" was already far advanced toward its ripe manhood. It was of this age that Chaucer was the herald; and he remains for us and all English time one of the keenest of the seers into the future.

CHAPTER V.

THE AGE OF SPENSER.

It is to the poet who stands, after Chaucer, foremost among the masters of early English literature, until we reach the drama of Shakespeare and the epic of Milton, that our attention is now drawn. The "Faerie Queene" of Edmund Spenser is not read to-day, because for most minds its allegorical costume is now as faded as the huge ruff and head-gear of the Elizabethan time; and only the lovers of our mother speech know what wealth of fancy is hidden in its cantos, or what a power it had in shaping the beauty of our verse for after time. For that reason we can choose no name which shall better bring before us the spirit of that age.

Our best introduction to his poetry is in a glance at that grand period of English history in which he appears, and the causes which ripened its intellectual growth.

It was a marvellous time. If we recall the swiftness with which the mind of England passed from its crude beginnings to such culture, or its manifold fruit in every field, in the drama or the romantic epic or lyric verse, in history and essay, we may well say that it has no likeness before or after it. There had been little hitherto of

strictly English literature. English prose was not born at all, save in a few monkish chronicles and polemic treatises. The "Utopia" of More was written in Latin, and his historic fragment stands alone, as a model of strong, keen Saxon speech. We have in poetry only the great name of Chaucer, followed by a crowd of dull imitators, whose relation to the work of our nobler artist we shall presently see. The drama had not passed beyond the rude "moralities" or a few stiff academic pieces like "Gorboduc." But all at once we see the dawning of the new age. It is, as if, like the first voyagers over the Atlantic, after picking up in the waste a bough or two laden with spring blossoms, and hearing the voice of a stray landbird, we had suddenly come on the vision of a fresh continent. It is the time of Spenser and Sidney, Raleigh and Bacon, Marlowe and Decker, Herbert and Hooker, and of Shakespeare, king of English poets. Yet to explain so wonderful a flowering of genius is not so hard, if we remember always the living law of literature, that it is the outgrowth of the whole people. Hazlitt, in his brilliant lectures on that age, has handled this topic with great power. I would, however, put first the cause which he puts last, I mean the influence of the English Reformation. It is a shallow view of that history, if we look on it as only a change of religious ideas. It was the new birth of the whole national life, and because England then awoke in the consciousness of her intellectual and moral personality, she was capable of a home-

born literature in all its fresh and varied utterance. None can read the essays of Bacon or the poetry of Spenser, without feeling how the sense of freedom from the intellectual fetters of the past breathes in the manly thought of the age. That influence was strong, again, in the shaping of the English tongue. There had been a gradual growth of the language, out of its semi-Norman form; and we perceive already in the prose of More and the poetry of Surrey, that the cumbrous dialect was giving way to the simpler, home-bred speech. But the opening of the Bible, in the tongue "understanded of the people," from divine to ploughman, with the Book of Common Prayer, did more than any thing else for the unity of the national life. Literature as well as faith passed out of the tutelage of the Church. It did not, as in a later time, lose its Christian spirit in the change; but the Latin language was no longer the despot over the style of the scholar, any more than the Latin creed over the worshipper.

But if this national awakening were the chief cause of such literary life, we cannot pass by others that blended largely with it. We should name chiefly the knowledge of the ancient classic authors and that of romance and Italian literature, already in its full bloom. There had been in the time of Chaucer an opening of these rich sources; indeed half of his materials is taken directly from the French, and a good deal from the Italian; but in the main the parchments of the monkish cloister

and the floating stories of French romance made up the learning of scholars. They were now thrilling through all their pulses with the new wine of the age, and read Plato, Tully, Plutarch, Virgil, and Tacitus in the better text. There was a divine intoxication in the first draught. The poet painted Cæsar and Coriolanus, and Duke Theseus; and the divine garnished his homilies with Greek and Latin. We can see, of course, a vein of pedantic affectation in many writers of this time, yet the strong English genius was not lost, and the style grew richer by the study of such great masters.

We have in Chapman's "Homer" a more Homeric music than Pope could give us; and the "Tasso" of Fairfax is richer than the tame paraphrase of Hoole. Nor can any reader of Shakespeare or Ben Jonson fail to see what wealth of material was drawn by the genius of that time from the newer literature of the Continent. It was an age of eager scholarship, and even the half-lettered caught much of its spirit from the translations, which brought home foreign thought and life.

All these elements entered into the national mind, and made that period at the same time one of original yet varied power. It is only within a generation, since the day of Coleridge, that we have begun to study the old English literature. We have passed from neglect to hero worship; and now, amidst the many noble critics to whom we owe our knowledge of the past, from Caedmon to the early drama, we find a host of *dilettanti*, who praise with

as little judgment as in the day of Johnson or Gay they scorned the fathers. There is a rage for the antique. It is sought after in rare editions, as the grotesques of old oak are copied in our furniture shops. All this is absurd enough. We need not worship the Elizabethan age. It was not a time when the language or the literary taste was fully ripened. Style is always a slower and later grace, which seldom comes with the first age of pregnant thought. Poetry had not then cast off its involutions and stiff conceits. Prose is never perfected till after poetry. If we compare the "Reflections" of Burke with the long-spun sentences of Hooker or the "Areopagitica" of Milton, we see how much more perfect the constructive grace of the first than the heavy cloth of gold which encumbers the rich thought of the older masters. But the real power of that early literature lies in its fresh, original life. The language was just at that point of formation where, with all the unsmelted mass of Anglo-Norman words, and the later pedantry of classic learning, it kept the pithy, homely strength of the Saxon. We find in Bacon, or Raleigh, or Hooker, and even later in the quaint grandiloquence of Sir Thomas Browne, more of the rich music of the English speech than in any time after them. But more than this, the English genius was so strong in home-born life, that even when it came into so large contact with foreign sources it received into itself all that it borrowed. Spenser is not another Ariosto. Shakespeare makes Coriolanus or Hamlet an Englishman. Daniel,

Davies, Drayton, are of a type of philosophical poets, born only in their own island. Bacon, with his world-wide knowledge, belongs to his nation as well in his grand diction as in his practical aim. English humor has its distinct type as truly as English statesmanship. This is the charm of that period. We cannot reproduce it, for the mould was broken in the casting of the work. Other influences with the day of the Restoration weakened the manhood of the literature as well as the national life. There is a broad chasm between Milton and Dryden, Shakespeare and Congreve. But we have happily outgrown the taste of the time when a history of the lives of the poets began with Cowley, and Addison's Cato was preferred to Hamlet; and we can know to-day "the thewes and sinews of our ancestors."

First of the great names of this great age stands that of Spenser, because he links the historic growth of English poetry with the time of Chaucer. The "Faerie Queene" is in its day what the "Æneid" was to the Augustan literature. And for this reason we should glance briefly at the poets who filled the interval, not so much to recall them from the tomb where most of them are well buried, as to show the steps to the poetic art which led to the Elizabethan epic. In Chaucer we have the master, to whom we owe the earliest model of a smooth, harmonious verse.

He made the Englishe swete upon his tonge.

Yet he was in the best sense a realist; a Boccaccio in rhyme, who painted English character and English life with a keen, homely strength. In Spenser we have the idealist, with a richer constructive fancy and a higher form of art. The genius of Chaucer created a school, which followed him in the same style of versified story-telling, and the flowing measure he had given them, but with little of his real power. We may unearth a few of these intermediate poets from their sleep in the old English texts. Occleve is one of these imitators, a Chaucer "sans eyes, sans ears, sans teeth, sans every thing." His "Lament for Chaucer" is a happy blending of pathos and bathos.

> But wele awaye, so is myn herte wo,
> That the honour of Englishe tounge is deed,
> Of which I was wonte have counseil and rede!
> O maister dere and fader reverent!
> My maister Chaucer, floure of eloquence;
> O universal fadir in science!
> Allas! that thou thyne excellent prudence
> In thy bedde mortel myghtest not bequethe;
> What eyled Dethe? Allas! why wolde he sle the?
> O Dethe! that didest not harme singulere
> In slaughtre of hym, but alle this lond it smerteth,
> But natheles yit hastowe no powere
> His name to slee; his hye vertu asterteth
> Unslayne from the, which aye as lifely herteth
> With bookes of his ornat endityng.

In Lydgate of Bury, however, we have some veins of poetic beauty, although he lacks the wit and the freshness of Chaucer; it is a long journey through his "Fall of Troy," and "Thebaid." These old rhymers sat

down at their work as the Greeks to the siege of Troy town, and gloried in huge historic epics. Yet there are passages of rich description, as well as gathered strength, that recall the best of his master.

God hath a thousand handes to chastyse ;
A thousand dartes of punicioun,
A thousand bowes made in divers wyse,
A thousand arc-blasts bent in his donjon.

When Aurora the sylver droppes shene,
Her teares, had shedde upon the fresh greene,
Complayning aye in weepynge and in sorrowe
Her chyldren's dethe in everye somer morowe.

But the poet who gives us, far more than his English copyists, the national charm of Chaucer, is of Scottish and royal blood. We pass by other Scots of the same time to remember King James I, who wrote the "King's Quhair," a rare gem of art. We find no sweeter bit of landscape painting in early verse than this:

So thick the beuis and the leves grene
Beschadit all the allyes that there were,
And myddis every herbere mycht be sene
The scharpe, grene, suete jenepere,
Growing so fair with branchis here and there,
That, as it seymt to a lyf without,
The bewis spred the herbere all about
And on the smale, grene twistis sat
The lytil suete nyghtingale and song
So loud and clere, the ympnis consecrat
Of luvis use, now soft, now lowd among,
That all the gardynis and the wallis rong
Ryght of thaire song.

* * * * * *

In hir was youthe, beautee with humble aport,
Bountee, richesse and womanly faiture ;
In worde, in dede, in schap, in contenance,
That nature mycht no more hir childe auance.

At this point a dearth of poetry begins, and lasts for more than a half century. The civil wars left no time for letters, until, under Henry VII, England gained a little repose. Scotland as before leads the way. We cannot more than name Dunbar, in 1465, a poet of rare power in description and in satire. His "Dance of Deadly Sins" gives an idea of his genius. Gawin Douglas is worth noting, as the first translator of classic verse, yet he wears the stiff plate armor of the time. Barclay's "Ship of Fooles" is a clumsy satire. But the poem we should specially note is Hawe's "Pastime of Pleasure." It is the most amazing pile of allegory, after the same structure as the "Temple of Glas," by Lydgate, of infinite tediousness, although with touches of fancy. But the interest it has for us here, is that it foreshadows Spenser; we read in it the tendency to allegorical writing, found more and more in all these poets, but here pushed to its last excess. Imagine such a time when men could read a poem of forty-three books, where the whole system of Middle Age education was imaged under the guise of knights and maidens and giants of romance; where Graund Amoure, the mind in search of Wisdom, goes on his adventures, enters the Tower of Doctrine, is presented to Mistresse Logike, Rhetorike, and Musike, then to Dame Geometrie and Astronomie, talks with them of

their lore, and so proceeds to the town of Chivalry, where he is nursed by Fortitude and Perseverance, and after slaying allegoric monsters, exploring the marvels of the five internal wittes and "supernal bodies," marries la Belle Pucelle, and lives happily till Age and Death arrest him, whereon Remembrance makes his epitaph, and Time, Fame, and Eternitye close up the grand phantasmagory of life.

> "Madame," quod I, "forasmuche as there be
> Eight parts of speeche, I would knowe right fayne
> What a nowne substantive is in his degree,
> And wherefore it is called so certayne."
> To whom she answered, right quietly agayne;
> Saying alwaye, that a nowne substantive
> Might stand without helpe of an adjective.

In this quaint grotesque poetry we know the mind of the time. Allegory is the early, picturesque form, in which its imagination builds in these "shews of sense" the ideas of science, religion, human history, which it has not yet clearly grasped. All minds were steeped in it, and indeed the historian Leo struck the keynote of the whole Middle Age, when he called it the age of fantasy. The divine turned Scripture into allegory; and the man of science saw occult mysteries in the stars and planets; the satirist of the church clothed his wit in the shape of the moral virtues and vices; and the poet gave voice to the common thought. And therefore we may find a real pleasure, as we do in the rich oaken grotesques of the cathedral, in even the cumbrous rhythm, the

"linked sweetness, long drawn out" of these allegorical masters. It was out of material like this that the poet of the "Faerie Queene," was to weave his more perfect creation, and Milton to build his grander epic of Paradise.

There is still another period which had its influence on the poetic form of English verse. With the age of Henry VIII the school of Chaucer gave way to the more courtly style made fashionable by Surrey and Wyatt. Of the lesser stars of that day, are Roy, Heywood the Epigrammatist, and Sir David Lyndsay, a very dull *Troubadour*. More important than all others, from his originality, is the strange laureate, John Skelton. It is to him we owe the macaronic verse. Yet under the doggerel there is not only a wonderful strength of Saxon speech, but a rollicking Rabelaisian satire, which made Skelton the mouth-piece of the people and the scourge of all from Wolsey to the strolling friar.

My name is Colyn Cloute,
I purpose to shake oute
All my connyng bagge,
Like a clerkely hagge;
For though my ryme be ragged,
Tattered and iagged,
Rudely rayne beaten,
Rusty and moth eaten,
If ye take well therwith
It hath in it some pyth.

But Doctour Bullatus,
Parum litteratus,
As wyse as Waltom's calfe,
Must preche, a Goddes halfe,
In the pulpyt solempnely;
More mete in the pillory.

In Surrey and Wyatt English poetry received from Italy a new form of graceful expression. We cannot praise them as some critics have done in a day when

poetry was held to be chiefly an art of nice rhyming. As young, courtly wits, they had travelled abroad, when the fame of Petrarch had created a tribe of sonneteers; and they reproduced all the cold *concetti* of the time. Their graceful madrigals became the delight of lords and ladies. Each Petrarch had his Laura; and love sighed in the most witty, frigid, sugar-coated verses. But if they are unreal lovers they are natural harmonists. English poetry had thus far borrowed the rhymed couplet from the Norman-French, with the alternate versification by the introduction of middle rhyme, and afterward dividing the line. The Latin monkish poems had supplied Chaucer's heroic verse and the Alexandrine. Many ballad stanzas, mixed rhymes, and song rhymes had been added. But the Italians in their musical tongue had carried this art much further. Surrey tried his skill in the *terza rima* of Dante, in the sonnet, and in the *ottava rima*, which Spenser followed.

The soote season, that bud and bloom forth brings,
With green hath clad the hill and eke the vale.
The nightingale with feathers new she sings;
The turtle to her mate hath told her tale.
Summer is come, for every spray now springs;
The hart hath hung his old head on the pale;
The buck in brake his winter coat he sings;
The fishes flete with new repaired scale;
The adder all her slough away she slings;
The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale;
The busy bee her honey now she myngs;
Winter is worn that was the flowers bale.
And thus I see among these pleasant things
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs!

Of Beauty.

Ah, bitter sweet, infecting is the poison,
Thou farest as fruit, that with the frost is taken,
To-day redy ripe, to-morrow all beshaken.
Where beauty so her perfect seed hath sown,
Of other graces follow needs there must.
I could rehearse, if that I would,
The whole effect of Nature's plaint,
When she had lost the perfect mould,
The like to whom she could not paint.
With wringing hands how she did cry,
And what she said I know it, aye !

We are now ready to understand the poetry of Spenser as the ripe fruit of all this growth. Our study here will be chiefly of his great poem. It is the mark of his genius, that his was not the gift of the lighter lyric; he needed a wide world of fancy to play in, and to dwarf him in small verses would be like putting Michael Angelo to carve figures on an ivory fan. We have the key to the "Faerie Queene" in the mind of the age. It may be doubted if, even in this revival of old English letters, more than the devoted few to-day read through this long poem. We can hardly imagine how it could have been the delight, not only of scholars, but of a court of fine gentlemen and dames in the day of Elizabeth. But if we now recall what we have seen of the allegorical feature of that early literature, we shall at once learn the secret. The age of Elizabeth was the exodus of chivalric romance. The modern world of science, of national law, of commerce, was coming out of the feudal past. Prot-

estant thought had already stript away much of the fantastic beauty of the old religion; and science had begun to doubt many of the legends of history. Arthur and Launcelot, Charlemagne and Roland, were no longer men of flesh and blood; nor did any listen to the stories of giant and dragon, with the childlike faith of former men. All had become fancy, yet it was still a delightful fancy. In the country of Cervantes chivalry had grown ridiculous, and poor Don Quixote tilted at windmills. Yet the sentiment of chivalry was not wholly dead; in the court of Elizabeth it was by no means ridiculous. There still lingered about it somewhat of the old charm of Norman romance; Sidney imaged the grace of the "parfait, gentle knight"; Raleigh was crusader and pilgrim; and the maiden queen in her fantastic ruff kept up the stately manners with the euphuistic speech of her time.

Here we have the secret of Spenser's own conception of its fitness to his readers. To us the "Fairie Queene" is a tiresome allegory, because we have outlived all this romantic feeling. But the poet reflected the setting rays, still gorgeous on that horizon of the age of chivalry; and as an earlier race read the metrical romances and believed them, so this read Spenser and dreamed with him. They entered lovingly into the fiction, like the happy Captain Jackson in "Elia," who served his mutton chop as turtle, and his ale as Imperial Tokay. The life of the court was a masquerade, and if we were dressed with

roses on our shoes and marvellous headgear, we should have perhaps the same style of speech that now seems so fulsome. To the reader of Spenser's time that form was not wearisome, its bewildering maze was its charm; each dame fancied herself the gentle Una, and each cavalier mirrored himself in Sir Guyon. It was a wonder-land of romance. Yet another feature of that day gives charm to the allegory. English commerce had already opened a new world; but it was not as now, when our men of science measure to a hair the height of Cheops; all that lay at a distance was surrounded by the penumbra of marvel, and the fancy painted a fairy land, where as strange adventures might be met as in the poem. It was thus that Spenser hit the very humor of his age. Nay, it is a curious fact in illustration of this view, that much of his poetic dialect is made up of words already archaic in his own day, which he chose as the rich, quaint setting of his fancies. What were the design and structure of the "Faerie Queene"? This is a question which has led to the most amusing chaos of opinions. Some censure the want of unity of the plan; others find in the allegory a fearful monster, as if, in Hazlitt's phrase, "it would bite them." I would sooner read through the whole poem than twenty pages of commentary. There is no mystery in its ground plan. Spenser has told us in his letter to Raleigh all we want. "The general end of all the bookes is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline." "I labour to pour-

traict in Arthure the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve Morall Vertues." His design, then, was to have twelve books, each of them giving the adventures of one knight, who personifies a virtue, and all at last united in Arthur, who is Magnificence or Magnanimity, the crown of the twelve. Had he finished the work, the last cantos would have brought them together and unlocked the allegory. Six books and a fragment alone remain. Elfin land is the scene of the story. The queen holds her court, and sends out her knights, each on his special journey. The first gives us the trial of Holiness, in the person of the Red-Cross Knight, who wanders with Una (Truth), and encounters Duessa (Deceit) and Archimago (Giant and Paynim). The second is the trial of Temperance, in the hero Sir Guyon. The third presents Chastity; and Britomart, the Northern Athene, battles in steel. The last three paint Friendship, Justice, Courtesy. Each canto is thus a distinct work, but the same characters appear here and there, and Prince Arthur among them all.

Such is the general plan of the allegory. But a secondary meaning accompanies it; and under the guise of these symbolic persons we have certain men and women, and events of his own time. Elizabeth is Gloriana and Belphœbe; Sidney, Sir Calidore; Raleigh, Timias; Duessa, Rome; and Una, the pure, struggling Church. It is plain enough, that we have in such a poem no exact unity, beyond the moral unity of the original idea. Yet

what could we want more? An earlier critic suggests that Spenser has sinned against the unities, and should never have intermingled real and allegorical characters. Another thinks the dress of the poem unsuited to the time, because holiness is not won by the lance, and chaste heroines do not wear plate armor. O rare critics! most delicate, nice monster! Imagine such an interpreter under the shades of Strasburg minster, shaking his head at the chaos of arches and mingling tracery; for that, too, is an allegory in stone, as the "Faerie Queene" is a minster, rising dream-like, multiform, yet with the unity of one grand thought. It is the charm of the allegory that we lose ourselves in its magic, that its faces and forms cross each other, and we let the story carry us at its will. We do not ask the exact solution of its mystery. We are content to wander in Elfin land with Spenser, and only know that wherever we go, we are in the company of the twelve moral virtues.

Let us now turn to the poem; and although we can gather only a few lumps of gold from this mine, let us so choose them as to learn the character of his genius. We must first glance at the form of his verse, since Spenser, above all our earlier poets, is the master of English rhythm in all its range of harmonious utterance. We have already seen that in the time of Surrey verse was enriched by several new measures; and the form which was chosen for the "Faerie Queene" is a yet richer addition. It is a new nine-line stanza with three rhymes, and closed

by an Alexandrine: there are eight lines of ten syllables each. The interweaving of the rhymes gives a subtle unity to the stanza, and the closing line comes like the gathered crest and slow breaking of a tenth wave along the beach. It seems to my ear a greater triumph for our English verse than Dante's *terza rima*, because the Italian is so much more flexible; yet Spenser has made it the "nimble servitor," in Milton's phrase, of his fancy, and so Englished it, that Fletcher, Thomson, and Byron have kept the type. Sometimes, however, there is a lameness of rhyme, and the unwilling word is forced to obey the music. It should be noticed here that Spenser's use of many archaic words not only gives the antique coloring so suited to the poem, but a richer fulness. We meet with many phrases of Anglo-Norman romance, like *chevisaunce*, *amenaunce*, but the body of his speech is old, hearty Saxon. There is not the same homely tongue we find in Chaucer; sometimes an almost wanton wealth, sometimes an overwrought art of words, as in the many cases of alliteration. Yet even here he followed the very genius of the Saxon, for the first law of its poetry was in this echo of the letters, and his ear is more perfect than even Milton's for the likeness of sense and sound.

> All sone the wound so wide and wonderous.
> Fiercely he flew upon the fickle fiend.
> And bowed his battered visor to his breast.
> With living blood he those characters wrote,
> Dredfully dropping from his dying hert.

We may well say that no English poet has a greater mastery of all that is lofty, sweet, tender, bold, subtle, or weird in his own tongue. The "Faerie Queene" is to-day at once the most wonderful of paintings and of musical compositions; nor have we a poet who has done so much to ripen the language in this wealth of verse as Spenser did in that early time.

But we must pass to higher traits than this of versification. I have already said that the chief difference between him and Chaucer lay in the ideal spirit of his poetry, and as we see that in the allegorical type of his "Faerie Queene" we trace it in all the forms of its expression. The power of Spenser is in his fancy. This is his realm. He is monarch of Elfin land; we do not tread the earth of England or any other soil, but the world of his creation. It is not, however, that constructive imagination belonging to an epic poet like Milton, that we find in our author. We are indebted to Coleridge for that philosophical view of the distinction between imagination and fancy, which has an illustration in the case before us. In the "Paradise Lost" there is that grand unity of idea which builds all the parts in just subordination to the whole, so that we never lose in the luxuriance of detail the oneness of the poem. There is this in Milton, in spite of his marvellous finished variety of scenes, the effect of an almost statuesque simplicity.

But with Spenser, as with Tennyson, there is no such epic unity. We have in the "Faerie Queene" or the

"Idyls of the King," a series of pictures, a world of wondrous fancies, each perfect in its kind, yet in each we rather dwell on the rich imagery, the specific face or landscape, than the higher meaning. Yet if this compel us to give both Spenser and Tennyson a lower rank than that of a few monarchs of epic or dramatic poetry, still we must acknowledge the ideal powers of Spenser. None can surpass him in the endless creative life of invention, the prismatic play, the sudden changes, the blending of this magic of the fancy with all his pictures of nature or human character. We see this ideal tone in all his descriptions of natural scenery. Chaucer gives us the photograph of each tree, each castle, or fair meadow, so that you know he has taken his sketch as the sunlight does on the metallic plate. With Spenser there is no such plain copying; his gardens and forest glens are transfigured in a "light that never was on sea or land." You feel that he was not a close observer, but a dreamy lover of nature; you are not sure what the tree may be; yet the ideal is after all the more perfect reality, and his fancy has only thrown over the landscape its purple glow, like that which you see, from the Hermitage, hovering and sleeping over the Bay of Naples.

We notice in Spenser what we seldom find elsewhere, except in Shelley and Tennyson,—the use of an image taken from the mental world to describe some natural object, rather than the opposite. Nature with him is at best the background of his ideal thought.

Here is a picture of Una.

One day, nigh wearie of the yrkesome way,
From her unhastie beast she did alight ;
And on the grasse her dainty limbs did lay
In secrete shadow, far from all mens sight :
From her fayre head her fillet she undight,
And layd her stole aside. Her angels face,
As the great eye of heaven, shyned bright,
And made a sunshine in the shady place ;
Did never mortall eye behold such heavenly grace.

The Bower in the Idle Lake.

It was a chosen plott of fertile land,
Emongst wide waves sett, like a litle nest,
As if it had by Natures cunning hand
Bene choycely picked out from all the rest,
And laid forth for ensample of the best :
No daintie flowre or herbe that growes on grownd,
No arborett with painted blossomes drest
And smelling sweete, but there it might be fownd
To bud out faire, and throwe her sweete smells al arownd.

No tree, whose braunches did not bravely spring ;
No braunch whereon a fine bird did not sitt ;
No bird but did her shrill note sweetely sing ;
No song but did containe a lovely ditt.
Trees, braunches, birds, and songs were framed fitt
For to allure fraile mind to carelesse ease :

An Enchantress Asleep.

And her faire eyes, sweet smyling in delight,
Moystened their fierie beames, with which she thrild
Fraile harts, yet quenched not ; like starry light,
Which sparckling on the silent waves, does seeme more bright.

The Cave of Mammon.

Both roofe, and floore, and walls were all of gold,
But overgrowne with dust and old decay,

And hid in darknes, that none could behold
The hew thereof ; for vew of cherefull day
Did never in that house it selfe display,
But a faint shadow of uncertein light :
Such as a lamp, whose life does fade away,
Or as the Moone, cloathed in cloudy night,
Does shew to him that walkes in feare and sad affright.

But this ideal tone of Spenser is equally well marked in his portraiture of character. It is through a world more wonderful than that of magic palaces and forests that we wander in the "Faerie Queene,"—the world of all the passions, the lusts, the furies, and the graces of human life. All appear, canto on canto, in their beauty or ugliness; and the poet is master of every coloring, from the purity of Una to the arts of Duessa, the bright strength of Guyon to the loathsome form of Mammon or the cave of Despair. It is one pilgrimage we recognize through the "obscure wood," the gardens, and the dens of life; our own battle with vice that passes before us in these preternatural shapes. There is always this moral power in Spenser. Yet we feel that he has not in his ideal portraiture of virtue and vice the real grasp of human nature. There is nothing in him of that insight which belongs to the great dramatist. Shakespeare sees the heart of man with the same clear eyes as Chaucer saw the face of nature or social life; and he gives us men, not personified virtues or vices. Othello is not jealousy, but a jealous lover; Macbeth is not remorse, but the human murderer in all the real phases of his guilt. It is here

that we find the most striking defects in the poetry of Spenser. There is too much of the ethical abstraction of the pulpit, and too little of the real world of flesh and blood. You see it in his tendency to paint exaggerated, colossal forms of angel and fiend. It shows itself in his utter lack of humor. The power of the great dramatist or novelist lies in the quick eye for the tragi-comic in actual life, the one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, the jostling of the crown and the fool's bauble, of wisdom and emptiness, mirth and tears. Don Quixote, the brave, crazy, but high-minded knight, imitating the feats of Amadis de Gaul, with Sancho, a comic type of the age of prose, embodies the soul of humor. Lear, again, does not make us laugh, yet his mad jokes give a strange foil to the fearful and the tender picture of the heart-broken king. But the grave fancy of Spenser can never stoop even to the reality of a jest. Nor is it merely the allegory that hampers him. Bunyan is "a fellow of infinite jest," and the characters in the "Pilgrim's Progress" walk and talk, weep and laugh, are real saints and knaves and hypocrites. But in Spenser, as in Milton, there is a solemnity even in the effort at humor. His Braggadocio is a coward, whom we would kick, but could never laugh at, as at Falstaff; and at times his description becomes merely nauseous, although "his very nauseousness is sublime." It is the same unreality of his fancy which leads to the mingling of all images, the goddesses of Greece, the elves and witches of Northern birth, Merlin

and the Paynims of the East, Tantalus and Pilate. That was, in part, the anachronism of that chaotic age, and we have a similar confusion in Shakespeare or Ariosto; but Spenser goes beyond them. The girdle of Florimell is made by Vulcan, and worn already by the goddess of love. Artegall goes to the temple of Venus, and the British hero fights with Mahound. Yet if the poet has annihilated time and place, he has left a romantic chaos. We lose ourselves willingly in his mystery, as in those old pieces of mediæval tapestry, where there is no beginning or ending, but a series of rich surprises, turbaned heads, knights in full armor, court, garden, and huntsmen and ladies, hawk on wrist, in the openings of the forest. He is a plagiarist, and we find in him Virgil, Tasso, Ariosto, the Morte d' Arthure, all the romance of all time; but, in the phrase of Dryden, "he invaded authors like a monarch, and what in others is theft, is in him victory." His spoils stand, like the marbles of all heathendom, gathered in Constantine's Santa Sophia, sustaining the noble dome, and dwarfed in the grandeur of the Christian building.

There is one last thought, with which I would close this sketch of Spenser. It gives us the keynote of his power. We have seen that the "Faerie Queene" was only half of the work he designed; yet, if a fragment, it has fulfilled that moral design, which he sought from first to last, to give the perfect portraiture of a Christian chivalry. This is its highest charm. It is the ideal of all the

virtues, of faith, purity, honor, country, manhood. There is no poet who has left a more stainless page, who has been truer to his Christian ideal. If we seek the fairest pictures of manly nobleness or womanly love, of strength or grace, of brotherly friendship, of human tenderness or divine holiness, we may turn everywhere to his writings.

And here, then, we find the abiding power of Spenser. We may not have the taste for his long allegory that the readers of the court of Elizabeth had; we may search vainly for the unities of person and scene, but this moral unity is the best key. If the inspiration of his poetry be caught, each random dip into his pages will discover some new beauty.

> For all that pleasing is to living ease,
> Is there consorted in one harmonie;
> Birds, voices, instruments, winds, waters, all agree.

The age of chivalry is never gone while we love the poetry of Spenser. The stiff costume of the past, the euphuism of the court, the quaint ceremony are faded; but so long as the soul of chivalry remain even in our age of prose, and a Christian faith remain, the "Faerie Queene" will live in our literature. And we can close with no more fitting words than those written of it by an American critic, that "he who at forty reads it again with the same pleasure as at twenty, is very sure to be a wise and happy man."

CHAPTER VI.

THE ENGLISH DRAMA.

It is not only as a curious study for the lovers of old English book lore, that we take up the beginnings of the drama in the age before the great master of the art, but because we cannot understand the genius of Shakespeare himself, unless we examine the soil in which it was nursed, and the ruder steps of its growth.

"The drama, beyond all other forms of literature, is the fruit of a high degree of social culture. Early literature is epic or lyric, because it has more simplicity of thought and life. It is when it has reached its more complex development, the dramatic richness where 'all the world 's a stage,' that it is capable of the manifold play of thought, feeling, action, scene, which reappear in the mimic life of a Lear or a Wallenstein. We are not therefore to look on this art as if it rose at once to its highest stature in Shakespeare. We confess his unshared genius. The 'Interlude of the Marriage of Wit and Wisdome,' 'a primitive composition' as Halliwell calls it, yet a good average play, had not been written twenty years when Shakespeare published several of his works. But it is still true that even Shakespeare was

only the outcome of all that England had been and was. Hazlitt well said that 'he overlooks and commands the admiration of posterity, but he does it from the table-land of the age in which he lived.' And not only should we in this view study, as Hazlitt studied in his brilliant sketch, the contemporary dramatists of the Elizabethan time, but for the most faithful portrait of the mind, the manners, the tragi-comic elements of the English Middle Age, out of which the ripe drama came, we must go back to the yet earlier play.

"The drama in England sprang directly out of the religious pageants of the Middle Age, the 'mysteries and miracle plays,' which were in use over all Europe. One of the strangest chapters of literary history is here opened to us. It is the fact that both the classic and the romantic drama were the offspring of religion.

Æschylus stands at the point where the popular shows held at the Grecian festivals and drawn out of the mythology passed into classic form in the 'Prometheus.' We have a like growth in the Middle Age, that fantastic childhood of Europe, where, under the surface of a Catholic faith, were seething all the elements of thought and half-formed social character. There had risen in the Church a mythology as rich and strange as the heathen Pantheon. It had been long the custom on the great holy days, especially Easter and Whitsuntide, to represent dramatically the scenes of history, Scripture, and the legends of saints; nor, although some local councils

had stopped the representations, and a few stern censors like William of Wadington had said that they were 'more for the honour of the Devil than God,' could they be suppressed. They were a sort of pictorial Bible, in which the child-mind of the people loved to read its religion. The earliest of these plays, now found, are French, and of the twelfth century; but by the next century they became common over Europe. At first they were acted in churches by bands of monks; but soon on stages in the open air, where the huge crowd could gather, and where there was room for the heavenly and infernal *personæ*, who played so large a part in these pieces, to rise and fall by the trap-doors. By and by these plays passed into the charge of the guilds or 'trades-unions,' of the Middle Age; and without doubt some of the hard hits at 'Bysshape Cayaphas,' and popes in limbo, came from the growing scepticism of the 'lewed folk' in charge of the laic stage. In the Chester plays each new scene is called by the name of a guild: the three kings, the Mercers' play, the Passion, the Flechers', Bowyers', Coopers', and Stringers' play.

"There are two classes: the 'mystery,' or dramatic paraphrase of the Old and New Testaments; and the 'miracle play,' taken from the legends of the saints. In England, however, the mystery seems to have been sometimes called a miracle play. Some of the English are borrowed from the French. Germany had rich treasures; their last relic still survives in the famous Ober-Ammergau

spectacle. In Spain this infant drama had the most honorable fate; probably because no Protestant Reformation changed the popular taste; but it ripened into the *auto sacramentale*, and the genius of Calderon raised it to the rank of Christian art. The mystery was suppressed at Madrid by the royal order no earlier than 1856.

"But it is with the relics of the religious play in England that we have here to do. There are no richer remains to be found than those of the Towneley, Chester, and Coventry collections; and any who have visited these old towns, still wearing such quaint traces of that very age, can readily call up the scenes of the drama.

"The Coventry mysteries were the property of the famous Grey Friars, and were shown at Corpus Christi. 'Before the suppression of the monasteries,' says Dugdale, 'this city was very famous for its pageants. The theatres were large and high: and being placed on wheels, were drawn to all the eminent places, for the better advantage of the spectators.' In many old writers we find allusions to them. In Chaucer's time they were not out of date, as appears, in his etching of Absalom."

> Sometime to shew his lightnesse and maistrie,
> He plaieth Herode on a scaffolde hie.

In 1456 Queen Margaret was at Coventry, when she saw "alle the pagentes pleyde save domesdaye, which mighte not be pleyde for lak of day." Even as late as 1575, "certain good-harted men of Coventree" had the

honor of performing before Queen Elizabeth in the celebrated entertainment at Kenilworth, and "gained considerable applause." And Heywood alludes to the devil as a famous character in the old Coventry mysteries—

> For as good happe wolde have it chaunce,
> Thys devyll and I were of olde acqueyntaunce,
> For oft, in the play of Corpus Christi,
> He hath played the devyll at Coventry.

The costumes were in part conventional. Divine and saintly characters were distinguished by gilt hair and beards. The demons wore hideous heads; the souls, according to their kind, black and white coats; and the angels shone in gold skins and wings. Herod was clad as a Saracen. Masks were also used, at least in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, so that the whole performance must have borne considerable analogy to the rude Greek comedy in the days of Thespis. The extracts from old parish and town registers relating to these plays, show us what care was taken to give to such performances as much stage effect as possible. The stage was placed on a cart, and there were different partitions to represent heaven, earth, and hell. Very intricate machinery must have been used to produce different effects. We read of charges for coal to keep up hell fire, and that on one occasion hell itself took fire and was nearly burned down. In the book of accounts we find among the articles of expenditure: "Item, payd for mendyng hell mought, 11*d.*" "Item, payd for kepyng of fyer at hell mothe,

11*d.*"; and, "payd for settyng the world on fyer, 5*d.*" Certainly a cheap bargain compared with our modern way of doing it.

There was a chorus by way of prologue, in which several personages entered with banners, styled in the Coventry plays, *Vexillator primus, secundus*, etc., who sang by turns a description of the coming scenes. The play was in rhyme, sometimes, as in the Chester text, the eight-syllabled stanza, sometimes the long heroic, or the riding rhyme, a rough measure, yet with a Saxon strength and the alliteration belonging to the Saxon poetry.

Nowe, gracious God, grounded of all goodnesse,
As thy grete glorie no begynninge hadde,
Succoure and save alle the, that syth and sese,
And lysteneth oure talke, with sylence stille and sadde.

We may now read a few extracts from these plays. There is the broadest range of subjects, from the creation to the judgment day, and the strangest blending of devout faith, not seldom of poetic beauty, with the most irreverent humor. Let us begin with a Coventry mystery of the Creation.

The introduction is quite striking, borrowed, doubtless, from the prologue of the Book of Job.

The Almighty comes on the stage in person.

Ego sum Alpha et Omega, principium et finis.

My name is knowyn, Gode and Kynge,
My werk for to make now wyl I wende,
In myselfe resteth my reynenge
It hath no gynning ne non ende.

I am the trewe treneté,
Here walking in this wone
Thre personys myself I se,
Lokyn in me God alone.

Now wole I beggyne my werke to make
Ffyrst I make hevyn with sterres of lyth,
In myrth and joy evermore to wake,
In hevyn I bylde aungelle fful bryth,
My servaunts to be and for my sake,
With myrth and melodie wourshipe my myth.

Hic cantant angeli in cœli, "Tibi omnes angeli," etc.

Now Lucifer enters and interrupts the song.

To whos wourshipe synge ye this song?
To wourshipe God or reverence me?
But ye me wourshipe ye do me wrong,
For I am the wurthyest that evyr may be.

Then comes a general dialogue between the good and bad angels, ending with the condemnation of Lucifer; and afterward God makes, in order, the world and its creatures.

One of the most fantastic of these plays is that of "Noah's Floode." It seems to have been a favorite with the people, as it is alluded to in Chaucer, and the portrait of Madame Noah recognized as a good likeness of the wife of that day.

"Hast thou not herd how saved was Noe,
Whan that our Lord had warned him beforne,
That al the world with water shuld be lorne?"
"Yes," quod this carpenter, "ful yore ago."
"Hast thou not herd," quod Nicholas, "also

The sorwe of Noe with his felawship,
Or that he mighte get his wif to ship?
Him had be lever, I dare wel undertake,
At thilke time, than all his wethers blake,
That she had had a ship hire selfe alone."

"I shall 'wale a portion with judicious care' lest I may seem irreverent, but we must not forget that without such oddities we can never understand the mind of the Middle Age.

"God appears and announces the flood.

I, God, that all this worlde hath wroughte
Heaven and earith and all of naughte,
I see my people in deede and thoughte
Are sette fowle in synne.
My ghoste shalle not linge in mone.

"Noah now gives orders to enter the ark. All his sons with their wives answer in pleasant verse: one brings an axe, another the pitch. Noah's wife alone refuses to go, and he gives some very cynic criticism on the sex.

Lorde! that women be crabbed aye,
And none are meke, I dare well say,
That is well seen by me to-daye.

"Now follows a catalogue of all the animals, sung by the family: when Noah renews his entreaty:

Wiffe, come in! why standes thou their?
Thou art ever forwarde, I dare well sueare.

She.

Yes, sir! sette up youer saile,
And row forth with evill haille;

I will not oute of this towne;
But I have my gossipes everyechone
They shall not drowne, by St. Johne!

He.

Come in, wiffe, in twentye devilles waye
Or elles stand their all daye!

Cam.

Shall we all feche her in?

Noah.

Yes, Sonnes! in Christes blessynge and myne!
I would you hied you be tyme,
For of this flude I am in doubte.

The Good Gossipes Song.

The flude comes flittynge in full faste;
On every syde that spreades full farre
For feare of drowning I am agaste,
Good gossippes, let us drawe nere.
There is a pottill of Malmsine good and stronge,
It will rejoyce both harte and tonge,
Tho' Noye thinke us never so longe
Heare we will drink alike.

"At last Madame Noah is pulled in by all the sons, the windows are shut, and the deluge rises." Such comedy as this may seem almost unintelligible to us in a time of religious belief. But in the first place, it is a mistake to think that those were times of great reverence. The religion of the Church, while it kept its doctrinal and mystical side for the lettered, had, in accommodating its worship to the vulgar, vulgarized its own character. There

was no such feeling of delicacy in handling these subjects as with us. "We must remember, too, that much of the absurd in all this came from the ignorance of Bible lands and history and language It did not make men laugh to see Queen Esther clad in a huge hoop, or Abraham in a peaked beard and slashed doublet. All persons and places are jumbled together without any sense of the anachronism. Noah swears by St. John, and Herod by Mahound, Balaam's ass holds a scholastic argument with the prophet, and the rabbis in the temple talk church Latin. Yet amidst so much that is grotesque, there are passages of deep religious pathos, and even poetic beauty. In the 'Sacrifice of Isaac' there is a rude yet tender dialogue between the son and the father."

"Father, tell me of this case,
Why you your sworde drawne have?"
"Izaak, sone, pease, I thee praie,
Thou breakes my harte in twaie."
"Would God my mother were here with **me!**
She would knele downe upon her kne,
Prayinge you, father, if yt maye be
For to save my liffe."
"O! comely creatur, but I the kille,
I grieve my God, and that ful ylle,
I may not worke against his wille,"
"Marye, father, God forbydde,
But you doe your offerynge!
Gif you must doe Godes byddynge,
Father, tell my mother for no thynge."
"My deare sonne Izaak, speke no more,
Thy wordes make my harte full sore."
"Father, I pray you hyde my eyne,
That I see not the sworde so keyne,
Youre stroke, father, I woulde not se,
Leste I against yt grille."

We have in the scenes from the New Testament the same blending of the devout with the grotesque. The Annunciation, the Nativity, the Temptation, the Raising of Lazarus and the Crucifixion are dramatized. The fine legend of the three kings is a favorite theme. Perhaps the scene on the hills of Bethlehem is as good an instance as any of the strange mixture of ideal and real. "The shepherds in this 'Bedlem mystery' are not Arcadian minstrels, but talk the coarse dialect of English peasants.

Heavy ale of Hatton I have,
And whotte meats have I to my hier;
A puddinge may no man deprave,
And a jannacke of Lancaster shire.
Loe! heares a sheepes heade sawsed in ale,
And a grayne to laye on the greene,
And sower mylke my wife hade ordened,
A noble supper as well is seene.

"Now follows the angels' song; the shepherds listen in wonder, and then walk to the manger. All adore the child, and as they go homeward lift up a new chant of praise.

Brethren, let us all three
Singinge walk whomwardes;
Unkinde will I in no case be,
But preache ever that I can and crye,
As Gabryll taught by his grace me,
Singinge away hense will I.

"In the 'Crucifixion,' a Coventry mystery, there is a very touching prayer of Mary at the cross:

O my sone ! my sone ! my derlyng dere !
What have I defended the ?
Thou hast spoken to alle tho that ben here
And not a word thou spekyst to me !

To the Jewes thou art ful kende.
Thou hast forgeve al here mysdede ;
And the thef thou hast in mende,
For onys haskyng mercy hefne is his mede.

A ! my sovereyn Lord, why whylt thou not speke,
To me that am thi modyr in peyn for thi wrong?
A ! hert ! hert ! why whylt thou not breke ?
That I were out of this sorwe so stronge !

Jesus

A ! woman, woman, behold ther thi sone !
And thou Jon take her for thi modyr !

"One of the most striking pictures of the religious creed is the 'Harrowing of Hell.' The universal faith of that day was in the descent of Christ to free the worthies of the old dispensation. In the Chester play, Adam appears, beholding a light, which, by the stage notice, is introduced in a 'cunning machine.'

O Lorde and soveraigne Savyour,
Our comforte and our counsceloure,
Of this lighte thou art auctour,
Me thou madeste, Lorde, of claye,
And gave me Parradice in to plaie,
But through my synne, the south to saie,
Deprived was I therfroo.

"Now enter Esayas, Simeon, Seith, David, all praising God. Presently Satan comes, seated *in Cathedrâ*, and the demons cry out :

Sir Sathanas, what man is he
That shoulde thee prive of thy postie?

"Jesus now enters, with a huge noise sounding through the underworld.

Open up hell gates anon,
You princes of pyne everye eichone,
That Godes sonne maie in gone,
And the kinge of blisse.

"After a quarrel Michael leads out the patriarchs and the pardoned thief, leaving Sathanas lamenting.

Out alas! nowe goes awaie
All my prisoneres and my praie.

"The 'Anti-Christ and Domesdaye' throw much light on the fantastic religion of the time. Anti-Christ appears sitting on a throne, writing chapters from prophecy to confirm his Messiahship. The kings come before him; he does miracles, descends to the grave, and rises again; and then having received homage, distributes the kingdoms of the earth.

I am vereye God of mighte,
Sonne and mone, daie and nighte,
To blesse I maie you bringe;
And the giftes that I beheighte,
You shall have as is good righte:
To thee I geve Lombardye,
And to thee Denmarke & Hongarye,
And take thou Ponthous and Italye,
And Rome yt shalbe thyne.

"Next Enoch and Elias enter, and confront Anti-Christ. They demand his proofs; two dead men rise, and are

convicted of being counterfeits. Anti-Christ kills the two prophets; at last Michael comes, and two demons bear off the pretender.

"But the wildest of all is the 'Domesdaye' in the Chester plays. God summons his angels, and gives them trumpets. The dead rise; first come a pardoned pope, an emperor, and a queen; after them a condemned pope, an emperor, a jurist, and a merchant, bewailing their fate. Christ appears in clouds, angels around him with his cross, thorny crown, spear and nails.

"The pope's lament recalls Dante.

> Now bootless is to aske mercye,
> For livinge higheste in eairth was I,
> And cuninge chosen in cleargye,
> Also silver and symoneye
> Made me pope unworthye,
> That bornes me nowe full witterlye,
> For of blesse I am full bare.
> Alas! why spende I wronge my witte,
> Harde and hotte nowe feele I it,
> Of sorowe must I never be shutte,
> Nowe helpes no praier.

"Some may think such rude work unworthy a place in literary annals. Yet if we are studying the growth of the literary mind, these pieces are of great interest in giving us the elements of the more polished poetry of later days, as a naturalist finds the diamond sleeping in the carbon. We have seen in these rough mysteries some features of imagination and tender feeling: beyond this there is one characteristic which shows us the very

origin of the English drama. Tragi-comedy (although the artificial rules of former days called it barbarous) is, in the plays of Shakespeare, the noblest type of dramatic expression; because it makes the stage a complete picture of human life. In its representation of grandeur and littleness, the noble passions and the base smiles and tears, the king and the king's jester, it is capable of displaying the largest range of character. Sophocles could not have written a play like Lear; for the modern world is more varied than his in its complex range of action, its lights and shades, its contrasts of social humanity.

Now, it is this tragi-comic feature which is stamped on the early religious drama. It grew out of the very life of the Middle Age. We can only understand it by supposing that under the grave surface of the ecclesiastical life all the new ideas, the latent doubt, the smothered freedom, the social fancy, found their only vent in bubbling out through these humors of art. The strange mingling of the grotesque with the most sacred of things cannot be overlooked. You see in the cathedral, amidst the carved saints, a grinning head, or, as in the porch at Rheims, a new-risen body with its head in its hand, or the dwarfs squatting on the columns of the side chapel at Lincoln, or the apes staring from the Antwerp pulpit. There is the same grim humor in the frescoes of Orcagna in the Campo Santo, in the 'Dance of Death,' and in a hundred forms of painting and poetry.

In like way the tragi-comedy of England grew, in its

time, from these mysteries; and as the great dramatic age flowered so soon after in the reign of Elizabeth, Shakespeare cast his work in this vital form. This caricature of Scripture, this odd jumble of angel and fiend, Herod and the shepherds, Noah and Noah's roystering wife, is the crude germ of that tragi-comic genius which could draw Prospero and Caliban, Othello and Bottom.

"But there is another aspect from which those quaint relics deserve our thought. It is natural enough, that one modern Prynnes should turn away with devout disgust from such gross superstition. But we must not forget that we are to judge those strange products by the canons of time and place. Tyrwhitt, in a thoughtful essay on Ober-Ammergau and the Symbolic Christianity,[1] compares the Passion play with the mosaics of Ravenna. In a day when there was no Bible society, the rich Byzantine pictures and the 'mysteries' were the illuminated Bible of the people, and although mixed with legend and gross in expression, we cannot doubt their good intent in spite of all their irreverence. It is precisely here that we learn their worth to us as a most faithful portrait of the past. We shall certainly find no better antidote to the still worse superstitions of our mole-eyed churchmen, who sigh after those 'ages of faith.' We cannot even reproduce the art or poetry. Our scholars, like Longfellow, who tried in his 'Divine Tragedy' to restore an ideal copy of the 'mystery,'

[1] *Contemporary Review*, 1871.

can only produce a curious grotesque. The Passion play at Ober-Ammergau, has been so toned down in the hands of managers at Munich, that it is no more than a tame, over-refined phantom of the original. If we would know what the Christian mythology was that swayed the mind of the Middle Age, we shall read it far better in this literature of the people, than in the octavos of Latin Christianity, and better yet than in the ideal treatises of Roman and Anglo-Catholic divines. In this fantastic world crowding the stage of Coventry, in Herod and his knights, Bishop Cayaphas, the doctor and the begging friar, we study the wrinkles and gray hair of that decaying time. The old faith in priestly power and pagan fancies, and the new thought, the half-whispered doubt, are seething together in the brain of the people; and we perceive the need of a Reformation which gave them instead of a dramatic legend the English Bible and the truth of Christ.

"From this point we can pass clearly to the next step in the development of the drama. It has the same striking interest as directly linked it with social history. The old pageants died out with the growth of the Reformation; and although here and there traces of them linger, after Elizabeth they are hardly heard of. But in place of the Scriptural or saintly legend, appears the quaintest type of the allegorical play, called the "Morality." Its earliest examples date from the eve of the Reformation; and it must have been a favorite with the court in the

day of Sir Thomas More. It was still a fashion among the people in the time of James, although supplanted among the gentle by the nobler poetry. The 'Morality' was a satirical comedy. All the virtues and vices: wisom, truthfulness, temperance, folly, hypocrisy, wantonness, strut on the stage and mouth their dark sayings.

"It is a curious question, how such plays grew out of the social state of that time. We have seen that the mystery and miracle play naturally faded away, when the gross mythology of the Church lost its hold on the people. When the Bible of Wyclif and Tyndale was read in cottage as well as hall, there was left no taste for such caricature. There followed a time of stern criticism, and the stage took its part as the vehicle of the popular satire. The growing dislike of prelate and monk vented itself in the keenest humor. But the stage was not yet capable of real comedy; the form of allegory or fable was just fitted to the intellectual fancy of the crowd. We might compare an English audience of that time with the Greek, who laughed at seeing the wisdom of even a Socrates turned into fun, or the frogs croaking their satire at the bidding of their comedian. But the likeness is closer between the literature of the time and this grotesque 'Morality.' We have seen in our study of Spenser, what a common feature the allegory was of all writing. But it was specially as the form of religious or social satire it was then chosen. The Reformation was in its earlier stage; it had enlisted most of the sharp

wit as well as the religious fervor; but a too open attack was still dangerous in a day when the satirist's ears might be nailed up for a fling at archbishop or noble, and therefore the stern Protestant humor, most dangerous in its jesting mood, revelled in the allegory. The satirist chose this form as his mask; and more than all, the stage in its 'Moralities' became the foremost teacher. It drew the personages of the day as a school-boy draws Master Birch on his slate, but in dread of the rod forbears to write the name, and only chalks some portentous figure with huge spectacles and stiff cravat; so the actor appeared as Pride with 'an unbridled stomach,' and the larger school-boy knew it meant Wolsey; he put bigotry in a friar's gown, and Gospell Libertee in a plain ploughman's smock, and the sermon was as telling as one of Latimer's at Paul's Cross."

We have from the literary scraps of the time the names of several of the favorite plays, as the "Four Ps," "Dives and Lazarus," "Hit Nail o' th' Head," "Lusty Juventus," "The Marriage of Wit and Wisdome." The following specimen of the style is from the last-named play. Its full title is: "The contract of a mariage betweene wit and wisdome, very frutefull and mixed full of pleasant mirth as well for the beholders as the hearers and readers." The characters are Idleness, Wantonness, Fancy, Dolle, Severity, Irksomeness, Snatch, Honest Recreation, Indulgence, Wisdome, Mother Bee, Witt, Search, Inquisition, Good Nurture, Catch, Lob. Its

date is 1579. Severity and Indulgence appear, and talk of marrying their son Wit to Wisdome. Wit goes in search of her, but on his way meets with Idleness, who calls himself Honest Recreation, and after falling into many hard adventures with Wantonness and other vices, is at last rescued. The play is in a rambling rhyme, sometimes doggerel, but with much comic effect. Idleness, the vice or buffoon introduces himself:

> A, sirra, my masters!
> How fare you at this blessed day?
> What, I wen, all this company
> Are come to see a play.
> What lackest the, good fellow,
> Didst the nere se man before?
> Here is gasing! I 'm the best man in the company,
> Where there is no more.
> My name is Idlenes, the flower
> Of the frying-pan!
> I am always troubled with the litherlurden,
> I love so to linger;
> I am so lasy, the mosse groweth an
> Inch thick on the top of my finger!

In his disguise as a French doctor and as a priest there are good touches of English humor.

> Ah! by Got, me be the Doctor,
> Me have the excellent medicine
> For the blaines and blister.
> Ah! me am the knave
> To give the fair maid the glister!

The clergy of that day are well touched in this verse:

I am of that condition
That I cane turne unto all
Coullers like the commillion,
Although some doe refuse me,
And some leden-heeled
Lubber will not refraine me,
And when men hath done with me,
Women will retaine me !

It may seem a crude time, when scholars like Sir Thomas More could be amused with comedy like this. But after all, there was more robust sense and reality of character with all the long-spun allegory than in much of the pointless farce of later days; and spite of its coarseness, its morality was always noble, by the side of the best in the unclean comedy of the Caroline time. One more example will show us the transition from the "Morality" to the historic play. It is the "Kynge Johan" of Bishop Bale, written about 1540. Bale was a strong Protestant, and to defend the Reformation he put the popular story of King John into drama. The play has no poetic merit at all, although here and there are passages of strong satire; but in it there are mingled the real characters of that past age: John, Pope Innocent, Pandulphus, Stephen Langton, and the allegorical persons, Sedition, *the Vice*, a jester, nobility, clergy, Civil Order, Treason, England as a widow, and Imperial Majesty. There is no unity of place or time; the pope appears in person in a scene on English ground, and seven years elapse between the papal interdict in the earlier part of the play and the submission of John. The king

comes forward in the opening scene as the most virtuous of monarchs, who designs

> By practyse and by stodye
> To reforme the lawes and sett men in good order,
> That trew justice may be had in every border.

Widow England then presents her cause against the clergy:

> For they are the trees that God dyd never plant,
> And as Christ dothe saye, blynd leaders of the blynd,
> Suche lubbers as hathe dysgysed heads in their hoodes,
> Which in ydelnes do lyve by other menns goodes,
> Monks, chanons, and nones in dyvers coloure and shappe,
> Both whyght, blacke, and pyed, God send their increase yll happe.

Sedycyon enters, and claims the right of the Church over nobility and clergy.

King Johan.

> Why giveth he no credence to Christes holy gospell?

Sedycyon.

> No, ser, by the messe, but he calleth them heretickes,
> That preche the Gospell, and sedyycyous scysmatyckes,
> He tache them, vex them, from prison to prison he turne them,
> He indygeth them, juge them, and in conclusyon he burne them.

Sedycyon goes out presently to dress for Syvyll Order.

Nobility, clergy, and Syvyll Order have a long quarrel with the king, which seems to end in submission to him; but Dissymulation enters syngyng of the litany, and lays

a plot with Private Wealth and Usurped Power. At last it is agreed to excommunicate John. The Pope appears with Langton and Pandulphus, and proclaims :

> For as much as Kyng Johan doth Holy Church so handle,
> Here do I curse hym, wyth crosse, boke, bell, and candle.

The *Primus Actus* closes with a speech by the Interpretour, a dignified and dull epilogue. The Second Part gives us, in the same style, the submission of John, his supposed death by poison, the death of Sedycyon the poisoner, and the restoration of the kingdom by Imperial Majesty, who pronounces the true doctrine of royal supremacy against all "Anticristes whelpes," the Papistes, and Anabaptistes "with their subtle allegoryes."

"We can understand clearly, in this transition form of the early drama, how the historic and the ideal play of the Shakespearian time arose. It was out of the 'Morality,' as artistic culture increased, that a real tragedy and comedy were to come. The shadowy virtues and vices vanished, and in their stead an Edward Second walked in the sounding lines of Marlowe; yet as we saw in the 'mystery' the germ of the tragi-comedy, so here we see the moral power, the grave humor, the insight into character, the English robustness that make the later drama a home-born product. It is curious to find traces of this rude play even in Shakespeare, who gives the comic ghost of the old Vice, a jester with his long coat and dagger of lath."

We are here, at last, on the border line of the Elizabethan drama. It is but a few years to the birth of its great master. We need not pause at the names that complete this period. Our purpose has been fulfilled if we have seen these steps of the historic growth. The fame of "Gammer Gurton's Needle," and "Ralph Royster Doyster," which is still older (1551), are not worth quoting, save as a transition to more regular comedy. John Heywood, the king's jester, in his "Four Ps," has left some biting satire, which gives us an idea of the popular fun over the superstitions of the time. The earliest regular tragedy yet found is the Gorboduc of Sackville. It is, however, a stiff, academic piece, made by classic rule, with nothing either of English freedom or early extravagance to give it a place in the drama which foreshadows the age of Shakespeare.

We come now to a host of playwrights. The "Spanish Tragedy" of Kyd is a mass of incredible bombast. The "David and Bethsabe" of Poole is a confection of bad sugar. We have the most comic proof, however, of the speedy growth of the art out of this ranting style in the plays of Shakespeare, who puts into the mouth of Ancient Pistol many of these sounding lines of the older tragedy.

Die men like dogs.
Merry Tricks, 1611.

Feed and be fat, my fair Calipolis.
The Battle of Alcazar.

—— abridge my doleful days !
Why then, let grievous, ghastly gaping wounds
Untwine the Sisters Three ! Come, Atropos, I say.
King Henry IV, 2d Part.

But what may boote to stay the Sisters Three !
When Atropos perforce will cut the thred,
The doleful day was come when you might see.
Mirrour for Magistrates.

But in Marlowe we begin to see the must of the frothy vat working into the sound wine. There is still a vast deal of the rhodomontade which is so deliciously mocked by Shakespeare in his own words.

Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia.

Very few of his plays are not surcharged with this "parlous stuff." Yet we find here and there grand passages, which confirm Ben Jonson's praise of Marlowe's "mighty line." His Dr. Faustus, with all its faults, has the traits of that sombre, sceptical genius. The artistic form of Marlowe is far inferior to that of Goethe; yet he finds in the old story the same haunting riddle of the knowledge of good and evil.

Settle thy studies, Faustus, and begin
To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess:
Bene disserere est finis Logices.
Is to dispute well, Logic's chiefest end ?
Affords this art no greater miracle ?
Then read no more; thou hast attained that end.
Bid Economy farewell: and Galen come.
Be a physician, Faustus, heap up gold,
And be eterniz'd for some wondrous cure.

Why, Faustus: hast thou not attained that end!
Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man.
Couldst thou make man but live eternally,
Or being dead raise men to life again,
Then this profession were to be esteem'd.
Physic, farewell. Where is Justinian?
Si una eademque res legatur duobus, &c.
A pretty case of paltry legacies.
This study fits a mercenary drudge.
When all is done, Divinity is best.
Jerome's Bible, Faustus: view it well.
Stipendium peccati mors est; ha! Stipendium, &c.
What doctrine call you this? *Che sera sera;*
What will be shall be. Divinity, adieu!
These Metaphysics of Magicians,
And necromantic books, are heavenly.
Aye, these are those that Faustus most desires.
All things that move between the quiet poles
Shall be at my command. Emperors and kings
Are but obey'd in their several provinces:
But his dominion that exceeds in this,
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man:
A sound Magician is a Demigod.
Shall I make Spirits fetch me what I please?
Perform what desperate enterprise I will?
I 'll have them fly to India for gold,
Ransack the ocean for the orient pearl,
And search all corners of the new-found world
For pleasant fruits and princely delicates.

But the great praise of Marlowe is to have been the first English writer of the regular historic tragedy. It is in his "Edward II," when he leaves the borrowed fancies, the Tamburlanes and Moors, to tread English ground, that for the first time he leaves his mock sublimities, and gives us simple, natural, grand poetry. It is here that we have the true growth of the English drama.

Edw. Leister, if gentle words might comfort me,
Thy speeches long ago had eas'd my sorrows ;
The griefs of private men are soon allay'd,
But not of kings. The forest deer being struck,
Runs to an herb that closeth up the wounds ;
But when the imperial lion's flesh is gored,
He rends and tears it with his wrathful paw,
And highly scorning that the lowly earth
Should drink his blood, mounts up to th' air.
Lei. My lord, why waste you thus the time away?
They stay your answer, will you yield your crown?
Edw. Ah, Leister, weigh how hardly I can brook
To lose my crown and kingdom without cause ;
But what the heav'ns appoint, I must obey.
Here, take my crown ; the life of Edward too ;
Two kings in England cannot reign at once—
But stay awhile, let me be king till night,
That I may gaze upon this glittering crown,
So shall my eyes receive their last content.
Continue ever, thou celestial sun ;
Let never silent night possess this clime ,
Stand still, you watches of the element ;
That Edward may be still fair England's king.

We reach now the threshold of the Shakespearian time. With Marlowe the true model of the English play began to take the place of these raw playwrights, and there appears a group of artists who deserve our notice.

Thomas Heywood, Dekker, Chapman, Marston, and Webster are the noblest of these. Marston and Webster were poets of rare tragic genius, and they often have passages of lofty fancy, of dark or tender passion, which are "preludings" of Shakespeare. But they, too, often draw unnatural characters and scenes that shock the taste ; they mistake the horrible for the sublime too readily, and love

"White Devils" and "Insatiate Countesses" too well for great dramatic art. The foulness of Marston's fancy is often loathsome, even to a critic without squeamishness. It is still a long step in development, if not in time, from him to the ideal tragedy of Hamlet or Othello; to mistake these "preludings" for his music is like the blunder of the Siamese amateur at the opera, who thanked the orchestra on the tuning of their instruments. But when the Elizabethan writers, instead of hunting on Italian soil for colossal villains, tyrants, and feminine devils, draw for us the men and women of their own land, they draw genuine and moving pictures. To my homely taste the historic play and the comedy are the best work of that time. There are, especially in some of the dramas of Dekker and Thomas Heywood, portraitures never surpassed even by Shakespeare himself. Indeed it is here far more, in my view, than in the more startling tragedies that we shall find the true progress of the art. "The Woman Killed by Kindness" is one of the most touching in its portraiture of the noble heart of the wronged husband and the penitence of the dying Mrs. Frankford. The "Eastward Hoe" of Marston is far beyond any of his stilted tragedies, and freer than the others of wanton offences against decent speech. And it is in the reality of the best of these early English plays that we find their real superiority to those of the after age of Charles. The fashionable comedy of Congreve and Wycherly does not present the genuine picture of Eng-

lish life, but the life of a witty court and a licentious time.

We need not excuse the coarseness of too much of the Elizabethan drama, even in Shakespeare. But though it was coarse, the stage was not essentially corrupt. It painted the rude manners, the unpurged speech of the "lewed folk," the vices of the courtier; but it loved to paint also the Christian manhood, the chastity of woman, the triumph of virtue, the saintliness of true religion. Its guise was often repulsive, but its heart was clean.

It is but a passing sketch we have made of the early drama. If, however, we have gained from it some idea of the steps of its growth, the knowledge will be of aid in a study of the most striking chapter in English literature. It may be accepted as a chief article in the critical faith of our time, that the modern romantic drama is the noblest product of literary art. And it is one of those strange facts of criticism, that for a long time this verdict was delayed. England as well as France worshiped the classic model. The artificial taste of all the oracles, down to Boileau and Voltaire, pronounced the plays of Shakespeare a semi-barbarous violation of the principles of dramatic poetry. We owe to German genius, to Schlegel and to Goethe, the appreciation of the great English master. No one now ventures to deny the rank of Macbeth, Lear, Othello, Hamlet. And since the profound criticisms of Ulrici, the artistic analysis of Goethe, and others, it is seen that the cause of this grandeur of the Shakespearian

drama lies in the very change from the conception and the structure of the classic play. We have already noted this in our study of the tragi-comic feature of the "mystery"; we may now glance at the whole case as it is linked with this history. The strict division between tragedy and comedy, the simplicity of the plot, the small number of actors on the stage, the unity of place and time, were in accordance with the simplicity of all early life. The Shakespearian stage, as it represents a far wider and more complex social life, required a greater freedom in each of these features. Its type is not so severe, but it is far richer. The difference is analogous to that in all branches of art. The ancient music was in unison, ours is in harmony. The Greek was perfect in sculpture, in pure form, but incapable of the deeper and more suggestive expression of painting. And thus in the drama there is a many-sided life, not to be shut within the classic unities. It is the tragi-comedy of life, that Shakespeare gives us, blending its grave and gay; there is somewhat for mirth in the most solemn scenes, somewhat of grandeur in its common, every-day humanity. Only this character of his art could bring out the universality of his genius. All the noblest drama has followed him. We notice in Schiller, that in his earlier manner we have the pure tragedy; but in Wallenstein he draws the rude humor of the soldiers by the camp fire, yet the grand, solitary spirit of the Duke, and the sad fate of Thekla. Such a work required a larger number of *dramatis personæ*,

a more life-like shifting of scenes; it required, too, variety of place and time. We need not defend all the incongruities found even in Shakespeare, but if the effects of the drama are an illusion, it is difficult to show why we should not be allowed to pass as in a dream from London to Bosworth Field, or to forget months as well as minutes.

Now in this fact of the growth of the Shakespearian drama out of the character of modern life, we have the link between him and this history. Shakespeare did not invent these peculiar features. He found them all ready. It was his work to take the rich but crude material, and shape it to perfection. We do not rob him in this of a jot of his supreme power; but rather this is his power, that he was no copier, like Racine or Alfieri, of any classic model, but he drew directly from English real life, and therefore wrought into his own web all these bold and novel features which had sprung out of the natural dramatic liberties of early time. Every one of the new elements of his great plays we have traced in that early literature. We have not only the tragi-comedy, but the immense variety of characters, the fantastic shifting of scenes, the rapid changes of time and place. There was, of course, a defiance of all rule in some of them. In the "mysteries" God and man blend in the dialogue, and in the "moralities," real persons and abstract personifications jest or scold together. In "Kynge Johan" we leap over seven years. In Heywood's "Fair Maid of the West,"

one scene is laid in an English inn; and presently we find ourselves in the court of Mullisheg, the mighty king of Fez. But the materials of the freest, richest power were here, and it only needed a master to shape them. It is precisely at this point of English development that the age of Shakespeare comes.

And thus we learn why England was capable of it, and why she gave in that early time the finest model of the European drama. Italy with the *Renaissance* was fettered by a classic past. France had no grand period of national letters till long after the Reformation, and then the reign of an artificial school made her incapable of more than the polished copy of the Greek by Racine. Germany was forced to wait long for Lessing and Goethe and Schiller. But in England the whole intellectual movement, which ripened with Elizabeth's time, came when the national brain was yet fresh, original, unfettered by precedent; and the dramatic genius caught all this reality of English life, all the fermentation, the extravagance, but with it the humor, the fancy, the courtly wit and the homely speech, the household manners and the historic grandeur of the time. Had the stage waited for a great master till the day of Charles or Anne, it would never have risen higher than the inflated heroics of Dryden, or the cold grace of Addison. Its happy lot was to have such a dramatist, and a group of dramatists at the hour when they knew no school beyond English history and the real life of their time.

And here, in conclusion, we have what will always give us the true interest in this early drama. Even as a purely literary study it is full of curions hints to a scholar who loves to trace in such relics the living growth of a people. But of the study we have made, be what it should, it will be more than a literary criticism. We shall read in these sketches of English passion and English humor a truer history than in Hume or Macaulay. We shall perceive the shifting scenes of the vast drama which the nation played through its long childhood; the tragi-comedy enacted in the palace and the cottage, at the banquet and on the scaffold, where king and bishop, scholar and yeoman, had their parts, and left their memories in this most living chapter of English letters.

CHAPTER VII.

ENGLISH PROSE.

OUR way has lain hitherto amidst the fair fields of English poetry; we now turn to the great masters of its prose. It is not merely for entertainment with the drama and the lyric that we left in the background the graver writers of history, divinity, and "divine philosophy," but because we follow the sequence of literary growth. Prose literature is always the fruit of a later culture, and, indeed, in any day a classic history or essay is rarer than a poem. The chief reason is that poetry is the first, natural utterance in which genius expresses its thoughts; history is epic, and philosophy, the lofty intuition of a Pythagoras or a Simonides. Prose, indeed, may rise to the fullest poetic height; but ordinarily it is only the vehicle of common life and thought. But when science and history and philosophy are developed with the larger culture of a people, then they demand a fitting language; and thus out of the rude talk of men come the varied, subtle, and expressive speech of the scholar and the man of science. As an art, poetry, indeed, is as truly as prose the fruit of this riper study; but there may be and is a virgin age of song, which

breathes the first inspirations of genius; while prose can have no such earlier season of beauty, but must be developed by slow, careful steps. Poetry springs like the tropic flower in a moment out of the glowing soil; prose is the bloom of a colder intellectual climate.

> It is the mountain streams that feed
> The fair green plain's amenities.

This striking fact is found in all literary history. An "Iliad" precedes by ages the work of a Thucydides and a Plato. Chaucer gave English verse its classic beginning, a century before Sir Thomas More our first classic in prose. It is for this reason that before the great age of Elizabeth we have but a scanty list of writers whose names are worth our thought. There were, indeed, books and bookmakers; but they were either scholars, who wrote in Latin, or the rude sermons of the parish priest. An English prose was not yet ripe. But it will be of interest to us to trace even these early steps; not only to recall here and there a now neglected work, but more because we may see how the noble tongue was framed which became "the large utterance of the early gods," and recorded the thought of a Bacon and a Raleigh.

What a theme, indeed, for a scholar is this of the growth of a language! to open the pages of the "De Augmentis," where invention and wit and learning seem to have found such perfect utterance, or the "Fairie

Queene," where the verse like the colors of Rubens pours itself out lavishly in gorgeous fancy, in excess of beauty; then to go back to the banks of the Elbe or the rough shores of Britain to hear it as it was spoken by a Hengist in those short ringing monosyllables fit only for the battle-field; and then to imagine what centuries of mental and moral change must have passed between; how words at first expressing some rude conception had been repeated from lip to lip, and refined, and placed in new combinations; how a harsh and crabbed word has become sweet as Apollo's lute; a sound that for the Saxon meant only a sensuous thing, has become refined till it conveys the subtlest thought of philosophy.

An Alfred musing on divine things in a rude day struggled to convey some new thought, until the effort created the word; and in this eternal generation the spirit of a people has gone forward, shaping and moulding its elements, inserting in its stock the grafts of other tongues, until at length we have the English of to-day.

In these earlier studies we have gained some idea of the sources of our English literature, and of the peculiar changes which the tongue underwent in its passage to the English of a classic day. There was a proper classic age of Saxon prose in the age of Alfred; meagre, indeed, and rude, yet important as marking an epoch. But from the decline of the Saxon power the language was passing through that great process of fusion with the French. No true English prose thenceforward is written

until the fourteenth century, and before that time we find a writer only here and there. Hitherto all works of history and divinity had been written in Latin.

There was no standard in English. The dialect of the court was a piebald of fashionable Anglo-French. The law employed that strange composite of French and Middle-Age Latin, which we yet read in the statutes of the ancient realm. No writer who affected nicety of literary merit would descend to the "volgare" of common life. It is curious to notice here as in Italy, how slowly the scholar learned the riches of his mother-tongue. Even More wrote his "Utopia" in Latin.

It is at this point that the first germs of English prose appear. Chaucer in several compositions made that prose melodious: as in his "Testament of Love," and "Tale of Melibeus." Fortescue ennobled the language with his treatise on "Monarchy." The printing-press of Caxton opened to England that exhaustless fund of translations from the French: the "History of Geoffrey," the "Golden Legend of Saints," the "Morte d' Arthure," and the "Book of Chivalry."

As yet, indeed, there was no master-work in history, in essay, in any sphere of letters. But we see in the movement the English language struggling into full articulate expression.

The first great work which was the fruit of that past and the promise of the future, is More's historic fragment. But a little before this is one work, the very first

prose of our language, which I name, both for its date, and because it has a curious interest for us as the great wonder-book of that first age of travel. It is the richest curiosity shop of all the legends and fables of the East, brought by the early pilgrims. Sir John Maundeville set out from England in 1322, and wrote his "Travels" in 1356, in Norman-French. It was translated into Latin and Italian, but the English version is his own after-work. The great name of Wyclif appears in 1350. It opens at once the Protestant Reformation and the new age of letters. The birth of religious freedom demanded the free word. And it is, indeed, a striking fact that the same movement which kindled the mind of England supplied its instrument Not the scholar but the people gave it utterance. The Reformation could have been nothing without the Scripture; and this again had no power in its Latin cere-cloths. It must speak to all; and it chose the Saxon.

And thus, again, the homely speech became the oracle of God; it gained a classic grandeur from the very thoughts it uttered, and rose at once to be the language of England. Already, indeed, there had been before translations of this and that portion of the New Testament into English; but they were in manuscript, and little known. Wyclif's translation became the standard speech. It is rude, indeed, but its value is not in its nicety of translation, although for its day it was the work of a master in learning. It teaches that letters themselves spring from a nobler root.

And next follows the first real classic of English prose, Sir Thomas More's "History of Richard III." It still remains a model of strong, clear, scholarly English. But it marks an epoch also.

The new learning of Italy began to influence the scholars of the island, a riper culture appeared, and from this point the names begin to multiply through the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI.

We need not linger in them. Cranmer and Gardiner, Barlow and others in theology. Foxe and Holinshed in history, or Sir J. Cheke and Roger Ascham. To us at this day they seem of little worth, but we must not forget that they did much for letters. To Cheke and Smith learning is indebted for its noblest growth. Ascham's "Scholemaster" is a piece of homely, clear English.

And now the language had reached that point when it becomes at last fitted to be the vehicle of a literature; and as we have seen the growth of our early prose, we have now before us another and a most captivating view of our subject. It is as the proper preface to the great masters who follow that I speak of the general features of this English tongue in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What made it so great, so rich, so much superior to the emasculated writing of a later time? Why does it draw the scholar, not as an antiquary, but as a lover of beauty, away from Addison or Hume to the music of Taylor or Sidney?

If we would name the features, good and bad, which

mark that culminating literary period,—and we should not forget its faults,—we should give the first place to the fresh and overflowing strength of its thought. For it surely is the highest canon of criticism, that the style of any age is not to be considered as independent from its material. It is when literature becomes predominantly an art, and busies itself, above all things with style, that we trace the first step in degeneracy. There is in this, as in architecture, a Doric period, when the outward form is nothing more than the severe expression of the spirit; and a later Corinthian, when the luxuriance of the acanthus leaf overruns the pure lines of form, and we feel that the age seeks beauty in preference to truth. And so with the elder literature; while it has far less of the finished grace of a later day, it is the writing of men who were so full of fresh thought that beneath all the stiffness and rudeness of style we see the power of the original English mind. The historian began for the first time to weave the materials of English annals. The theologian handled the most earnest questions of the Christian faith. It is amazing to see what a ponderous mass of learning is given us in those books of every sort.

All the treasures of scholarship are brought forth and poured out in their writing, and with earnest, thorough, and indefatigable labor. There is not a great work which is not exhaustive in its richness. We have had much new discovery since in many lines of science and of criti-

cism, but the English people have had few such giants of learning. Where is the writer in polity since Hooker? where the work that takes the place of Field? where such a coronal of learned gems as in the "De Augmentis"? Latimer cannot preach a sermon at Paul's Cross, or Donne before the king, or Sir Thomas Browne or Burton write an essay, but it bristles with rare learning. Their works remind us of conquerors who exhibit in their triumph all the spoils of war.

It is this fulness that makes at once the vice and charm of their style. The defect of almost all of them is over-elaboration, seeming pedantry of learning. We cannot call this pedantry a merit; it was the sign of an unripe taste. But we must remember that to them this classic learning was an intoxication; it was not pedantry for them, but the newly awakened love of all past wisdom. And their scholarship was solid and thorough. In them it implies no want of intellectual power. But we wonder more at the muscle which wields, like the heavy plate-armor of the Crusader, all this learning. We are entertained by it as in some baronial hall hung with the iron trophies of war; not as in a modern dining-room, among the more tasteful refinements of our day.

If I am not mistaken, the Greek was then more cultivated than in after-days, when the Latin tongue became the model of every scholar, from the prize poet to Gibbon, Bolingbroke, and Johnson. This age produced the readers of Plato and of Aristotle: scholars who can sel-

dom be matched unless in modern Germany; and I think the fact explains to a great degree that more life-like and original vein so marked in their noblest writing. For the Greek was the language of a people who did not borrow as the Roman borrowed, but whose thought sprang out of the fresh mind and the independent life. We pass here more directly to the English style of the seventeenth century. The first great feature to be marked is the predominance of Saxon words and Saxon idiom. I do not mean by this that there was no mixture of classic phrase; on the contrary there may be found in these writers much, in this regard, that we should call pedantic; many words that have not since been naturalized, and forms of expression that are uncouth and semi-barbarous. There was no exact and nice taste. But any one who opens the page of Sidney, of Raleigh, of More, of Taylor, will be struck with the vast proportion of home-born words; and paradox though it be, we may venture to say, that even in Sir Thomas Browne there is more of rich, strong, nervous English than in Steele or Tillotson.

The spirit of that day was yet near its fountain-head. There are instances of this on every hand. The noblest example is given in that translation of the Bible, which to this day, like that of Luther, remains unsurpassed. The Bishops' Bible, of which we have still the remains in our Psalter, is a yet finer proof of this Saxon power.

It may be said without exaggeration that our English

Bible has been the book as well of the scholar as of the "lewed folk"; has not only inspired the faith, but has been the great classic of our mother-speech. Nor must we pass by in this connection that Book of Common Prayer, which we cannot read without feeling that the inspiration of the holy word breathes in its pages and offices. We notice with what care the compilers, learned divines, yet home-born Englishmen, combined in it the dialect of the scholar with that of the people.

It is the Saxon element that gives their peculiar richness to the writers of this age. With every language, the nearer we are to the sources, the nearer we are to what makes the poetic power, the words that photograph the image of living objects, as they were when first used. But this poetic power is yet more striking in the Saxon, which abounds in those words that incarnate the strength and beauty, the manly thought, the warm feeling, of this great race.

There is thus a striking affinity between the poetry and the prose dialect of the seventeenth century. In this respect we have an advantage over the classic tongues in the fact that our poetry is measured by accent and not by quantity. In the Latin the law of quantity excluded many of the words of prose from use in poetry. But with us, as accent imposes no such restriction, the language of prose or verse is of equal scope. We often praise, and with reason, the great superiority of the classic rhythm in other respects. Yet we may

hold the chief reason of the poetic character of our prose to lie deeper still, in the Saxon genius itself. When we praise this poetic feature of this early writing, we mean no mere fanciful or fluid grace; but all that gives strength to language, its bone and muscle, as well as its fresh hue and childlike form; that gives the power of a Rembrandt to a page of Clarendon, or in a sentence of Bacon the essence of long modern essays. In this regard, therefore, we must always prize this English prose. We may find more eloquence of dialect, more refinement of words, a larger and fuller vocabulary in later days, but we must go back to them for the home-born speech. We may hold it the sign of a sure decay in culture when a people lose their native dialect; and there are few more marked proofs of the half education which we are getting in America than this. A Yorkshire man will often recall to you in his rough homespun talk the English of Raleigh; but a New Englander comes out of his common school with a conversation made up of all the largest centipedal words in Webster; never a good, homely, telling monosyllable. Indeed it is here the mark of a scholar to talk in simple English, and of the people in Latin derivations. A peddler will always "negotiate," instead of buy or sell; and I heard a lad, a day since, telling another on the way to his skating to take a less "circuitous route."

Let us now turn to another feature of English prose,—the construction of the sentence. It is the general modern

idea that the syntax of the old writers is rude, clumsy, and unnatural; and even many who love them well will admit this. The long, tortuous sentences of Taylor or of Milton weary our ears; we prefer the brief, well-rounded, epigrammatic phrase of Macaulay. Doubtless there is a defect here in the prose of the seventeenth century. It is very often, in the best, cumbrous and involved so as to darken the sense as well as to destroy the unity of expression. Syntax is always a later elaboration. But there are two points to be noted, which for a genuine lover of the English may make it doubtful whether our gain is not alike a loss. The first is the ancient order of the sentence. The present position of the noun, just before the verb, is a form borrowed from the French, a language of different syntactical genius from the Saxon. But the earlier Saxon involution seems more accordant with the genius of the language, and however often weakened, it as often gives a wonderful force and poetic beauty. But, again, the long sentence, tedious as it is in many hands, is with a genius like Milton or Hooker most fitted to bring out the stately rhythm of our language. Rhyme is not necessary to constitute verse with us, as in the French. The grandest of our poetic forms, the blank verse, is a rhythmical prose; and in the highest prose there is a rhythmus, a harmonious flow and cadence, appealing to the poetic ear, and making the difference between a barrister's brief and the eloquence of a Burke. This rhythmic quality of our Saxon tongue demands the

long sentence. But our late style, in avoiding this earlier cumbrousness, has gone to excess in disjointed and artificial neatness. We can take no better instance than Macaulay. His sentences are all epigrams. "There is no union between them," to use the phrase of Coleridge, "more than of marbles in a bag, each round, hard, and glittering." But this, so far from a true style, is surely a bad one; not only because it spoils rhythm, but because it destroys all natural expression; it leads the writer to be hunting at every moment for an antithesis, a witty turn, and to sacrifice for a brilliant touch the truth of history or character. Morality and literary taste are more akin than we suppose. We turn with delight from this poor *staccato* of a Macaulay to the music of those old writers, even though it be over-stately, to those majestic sentences of Milton or Hooker, rising, clause on clause, in a volume of growing music, the development of the main thought sustained by other related thoughts that express many moods, and in a voice now strong, now soft and plaintive, until it bursts on us in a final harmony like the chorus of a cathedral anthem.

Having studied the features of English prose as it grew in the seventeenth century, we can understand its power as the expression of the English mind, and the manifold forms of literature in which it was embodied, which arose because they were fitted to its genius. It was a language whose roots and trunk were Saxon, which had grafted upon it many derivations from French

and from the classic learning; but it had incorporated them into itself, without greatly changing the native stock. The Saxon had given it strength, solidity, poetic beauty; the French had contributed range of diction, colloquial ease, and elegance; the Latin, the sonorous and lofty diction of the schools. It was a tongue which suited the character of the people, massive, weighty, rich, yet flexible. In poetry its stately line could sustain the march of Shakespeare, and the wing of Milton at heaven's gate; yet it was capable of the lightest madrigal of Surrey. In prose, whatever was grave, solid, deep, and rich had its natural utterance. These characteristics both guided its path, and appear in each classic department of our English prose. The history may be named first. It grew out of the statesmanlike genius of England, her regulated liberty, her solid, practical intellect. More opened its literature with his powerful fragment of Edward and Richard. Bacon in his "Henry VII" gave the model of a clear, solid, sagacious criticism; and Clarendon closed the period with a history which remains, whatever its faults, the model of such writing, to this day. History is the specialty of England; not the subtle learning of a Niebuhr, but the practical history, dignified by the moral tone of a Christian state, as in Dr. Arnold's writings. The English pulpit exhibits the same character, from the homely fervor of a Latimer to the scholarly sense of a Sanderson; it always uses a sonorous, grave, effective eloquence, but it seldom rises to the impassioned power of a Bossuet.

In philosophy it has little speculative power. The language has not the subtlety of the Greek or modern German; and it is as impossible to translate Plato into it, as into the Latin, which stands over against the text of an Ast or of a Bekker like a Russian hut opposite a palace. Even Cudworth could not mould it, or Coleridge naturalize reason and understanding, perception, and conception; but the stubborn practical genius refuses to admit such niceties of thought. But within the English range of practical and social ethics, it is a language of power. And the English essay, as in Bacon, is natural and "to the manor born."

CHAPTER VIII.

ELIZABETHAN DIVINES.

It is significant that the first name of our classic English prose is that of Richard Hooker. For it proves that "Theology is not only the queen and witness of all wisdom, but that it ministers the nourishment and life of that literature, which most men think the idle pastime of the mind"; and, more nearly to our subject, "that thus our English mind hath been fed from these deeper sources, and thereby gained the stately thought and devout heart which mark that golden prime of the seventeenth century."

Though we leave the delectable mountains of drama and epic, we are not led into the dry waste of homiletics when we propose to bring before us the greatest of the names which have immortalized the pulpit. It were not easy to name all of these giants of learning and power, who have upheld the Church against Pope and Puritan, and who cannot be forgotten by the historian. But ours is a more genial task, to choose the selecter few who stand beside Spenser and Raleigh and Milton, a Hooker, an Andrewes, a Hall, a Donne, and best beloved of all—Jeremy Taylor.

These writers form a family group in which each member differs from another; yet they are alike in the grand features that make the type of old English divinity. The same profound theology, the same reverent heart, the same saintly expression, are found in this, the fairest type beyond that of Geneva or of Rome, which a Christian land has produced. In the pages of a Walton, the poems of a Herbert, the rich treasures remain to us which we study here.

Let us glance, at the outset, at the influence of English theology on its letters, and there see the characteristics of that age. And first, that wondrous age which bloomed under Elizabeth sprang out of the Reformation. Religious ideas in England then, as in the noblest epochs of all lands, first awakened the national mind, which had slept long in superstition; and the impulse given by that spiritual life communicated itself to every branch of science and letters, as the wave which washes one spot breaks at the same time along the shore. The Bible of Wyclif opened the mother-tongue. The truth uttered by Latimer ripened in the after-age; and without this, no Bacon had given new laws to science, and no Spenser had painted the wandering of Una and the arts of Duessa.

In all the earlier essays of literature, in "Piers Plowman," in the drama, even in Chaucer himself we see this fermentation of the popular thought.

It is impossible to read the literature of this great cent-

ury, without perceiving, in comparison with the *belles-lettres* of the age of Anne, the colder spirit, the loose morality, the literary idleness of the later time. It is the difference between an age of elegant leisure and one of earnest thought. The grave sentiment of a Daniel and a Marvell, the devout humor of a Browne, the large proportion of religious poetry, like Herbert's and Wither's, all show that literature had not become mere art. And hence we find often a common quality in the divines and the men of letters; we have the drama in Latimer, and sermons in Shakespeare. In a later day the pulpit grew less vital, and the poetry less religious. When, with Charles and Gallic license, the heart of religious faith died out, the literature of the seventeenth century died also.

And hence we feel the immense influence of these divines on that literature. The pulpit in after years waxed cold, as it became the representative of a settled Protestantism: the tame eloquence of Stillingfleet, the half-sanctified wit of South, and the learned stateliness of Barrow succeeded to the earnest eloquence of the elder fathers. But then the pulpit was a burning as well as a shining light; its teachers were men in the very van of the religious conflict; their vast erudition, their theological discourse were weapons, not hung in the armory, but worn night and day; and an English people read and listened, because both were animated with the same faith. It was a day when even the courtier was a student

of theology, a day of serious-minded, Christian men. Sir Henry Wotton read Bellarmine, while mingling in the gaieties of an Italian court.

We turn now to the characteristics of that old English divinity. It was an age of polemics, and the Christianity of the whole period took mainly that direction. The later time had not yet come, when the vital questions of theology had become matters of indifference, and the Church put forth only treatises on the "External Evidences of Christianity," or on "Natural Theology," and the cold morality of a Paley. There was a living faith with Churchman and Puritan. The question on one hand was with a dexterous Bellarmine, a Fisher, or the priests of Roman pretension; and on the other with a Cartwright and a Travers. That English Reformation was at its beginning a protest against Rome, but not, as on the Continent, the impulse of here and there an individual mind; it was the organic, collective life of the Church; and therefore, in the words of Jewel, "it took the pattern of reforming religion from whence the ground of religion was first taken: the Church of the Apostles, and old Catholic Fathers." And hence its theology embodied this spirit. The Reformation of the Continent crystallized around the notions of a Luther or a Calvin; it became only the embodied shape of their own intellect—fiery, strong, but one-sided, angular, distorted. Scouting all authority, the Protestant was as malignant against a church window or a surplice as against the mass. He

forged the links of his logic until in its fetters Christianity became a "Quinquarticular" controversy. In their zeal for the doctrines of election and irresistible grace, men forgot the ethical side of religion, while, in the words of a clever Italian, "the women and shopkeepers were able to judge of Predestination, and the most ignorant of the common people were mad for a super- or re-Reformation of Religion, like the man who would not cease to whet and whet his knife till there was no steel to make it useful."

But it was not so with the English Church. Although thoroughly Protestant, it had within itself larger, more harmonious, more genial elements. It kept alive a reverence for a Christian Past, for sacred learning, and for the beauty of a Christian art. It held a moderate theology, a wiser and larger charity.

When the Calvinist urged that the admittance of the notion of merit excluded the Romanist from the possibility of salvation, Hooker, while he clearly defined Justification, said: "Let me die, if it be ever proved that simply an error doth exclude Pope or Cardinal utterly from hope of life."

It pursued that practical tone which never forgot in speculative questions the faith that maketh by love the relations of outward duty. The living heart of its pulpit spake in that stately sermon of Cudworth: "We have no warrant in Scripture to peep into these hidden rolls and volumes of eternity, and make it our first thing that

we do, when we come to Christ, to spell out our names in the stars, and to persuade ourselves that we are certainly elected to everlasting happiness, before we see the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, shaped in our hearts."

There is a difference, in some regards, between the earlier divines, as Cranmer, Jewel, Rogers, and their successors of Elizabeth and James. The first Reformers were more Calvinistic in their opinions, friendlier to the teachers of the Continent: while later, the separating lines were more clearly drawn. We hear Bishop Jewel writing to Peter Martyr as "my Father," and Grindal, in 1568, to Bega and to Bullinger: "Commend both us and our ministry to the Lord in your prayers"; but it must be remembered that at the outset both were busy with the same strife against Rome. It was only when that strife was over, and Calvinism began to carry out its logical and theological spirit, against all moderate faith, all reverent worship, that this first alliance was broken. This is the only true solution of the fact. It is false to assume that the English Church as a body changed its divinity or its church principles. We grant readily that there were ultra Calvinists then as now, and an extreme right of Churchmen, as Laud. But in the main the theology of the Church has been the same. Nothing can be more marked than the contrast between the great Nonconformist writers, even to Horne and Baxter, and those of whom we speak. The spiritual power,

the eloquence and piety of the former are saturated with Calvinism. But with the latter, that wise spirit which joined freedom of thought to the metaphysics of Christian doctrine, kept the balance between Calvin and Arminius, and held the minds of men to the plain duties of piety. The ethical tone, so marked in the English pulpit, as in Barrow and Butler, is seen in the spirit of our Articles as well as in the sermons of all these great men.

We turn to another striking point—the devotional character of that literature. It is the most beautiful trait of that day, that amidst all the stir and strife of controversy, such treasures of meditative piety remain,—books of prayer, holy lyrics, manuals of self-discipline. Scattered amidst folios of polemics or treatises of divinity we find them wherever we look; and we turn back with a feeling of surprise at the barrenness of our time to the devotions of Andrewes, to the meditations of Hall, and the "Holy Living and Dying" of Taylor. There is a saintly fervor in them; a rich glow not only of expression, but of thought, that marks them as coming from the very heart of that English time. This tone is distinct from the devotional writing of the Puritan; less self-conscious, less gloomy, it is the devotion of calm, still, lowly minds; while, on the other hand, it is distinct from the proper type of Romish asceticism, from the cloistered, ghostly meditation of à Kempis, or the ecstasies of François de Sales. There is about it the quiet beauty of an English

rural parsonage; a holiness, deep as that of the recluse, but which has grown in the sweet relations of home life, which knows the cares and joys of the heart, and has mingled with the world while above it. We know nothing fairer than that old English type of religion. We learn the power of that age, when we see its intellectual strength mingled with such a spirit. We turn in that most exquisite of books, the "Lives" of Walton, to the picture of Hooker, when after his battles with Travers, he resigns the mastership of the Temple, and goes to his little parish, "where I may study and pray for God's blessing upon my endeavors, and keep myself in peace and privacy, and behold God's blessing spring out of my mother-earth, and eat my bread without opposition"; we see Sanderson, the greatest of casuists, living forty years in Boothby Pannell, studying and fulfilling his pastoral duties, so bashful that he could not lift his eyes from his sermon, which "happy infirmity" proved so "like the radical moisture in man's body, that it preserved the life of virtue in his soul"; or Herbert, the nobleman and scholar, a country parson in the sweet retreat of Bemerton, kneeling in his empty church at his prayers, and "composing divine Hymns which he set and sang to his lute or viol," and a daily angel at the sick-bed or in the cottage of the poor. This was the heart that produced that steadfast strength of the English Church.

But I must hasten to speak of the style of that old

English prose, and here I know well that I shall find many who will hold me little else than a worshiper of a clumsy Elizabethan architecture. But I do not for a moment deny the faults of that prose. The cumbrous sentence, the overloading of classic and Patristic learning, the mixture of quaint conceits, are evident enough. But surely to allow these to hide from us the nobler features would be false; a very shallow criticism is enough to disclose the surface defects, as the critical cobbler could find mistakes in the sandal of the statue, but could not see the godlike beauty of the face. Perhaps, however, if we examine the higher qualities we may see the faults diminish.

We should notice first, the fulness, the overflowing strength of that English divinity. It is the writing of men who are so fully charged with the thoughts of the great subjects that they handled, that they pour into the least channel the whole tide of their learning and their logic. When we open those books we are amazed at their riches, the treasures hid in the sand of the driest theology. Since then we have had much discovery in every field of Scriptural criticism and doctrinal truth; but no age has such learning. The pulpit of that time gives us the best features of the English Church. In later days it became more refined and more academic; but the stateliness of Barrow, the tame eloquence of Tillotson, do not give it such power over us. In the earlier time it spoke in the tongue of the people. The

sermon was no rhetorical essay on some general topic of morality, or scrap of Christian sentiment; it handled questions that concerned the very life of the Church and the nation. If we look on those discourses as tedious and dull, it is because we do not put ourselves into the place of the hearers. These sermons expressed the very fulness of those rich brains, in which not a subtle analogy, not a glowing thought was lost. They were often pedantic and cumbrous, and yet compared with those of a later day, they have much more of plain and pungent expression. There is no finer English. The tongue of a grave, solid, rich, strong mind found its noblest utterance in the pulpit, with every variety from the homely power of a Latimer to the sustained music of a Taylor; in all, a sonorous, mighty eloquence. In their writing is that hearty, home-born Saxon which belongs to the early prose. It is by no means pure; on the contrary they have, as "great learned clerkes," a large proportion of foreign, half-naturalized words; but yet there are no sources of genuine English richer than our divines. Their speech was near the fountain-head. And here we have the secret of that poetic power which we see in them. If we take up Hooker on "Justification," or Donne, and compare their pages at random with Tillotson or Sherlock, we may note the strength of those Saxon words, the happy choice of a single phrase, the richness of a home-bred idiom.

There are two great periods which we may distinguish

in these early divines. The first extends through the age of Henry VIII and Edward VI; the second, from Elizabeth to the Revolution. The age of Henry and Edward has left a host of worthies; but it was a time too busy with the immediate strifes of the Church for the literary culture of an after-day. Jewel may exhibit the character of its scholarly learning, and Latimer the homely preacher, who spoke the burning Gospel to king and artisan.

Jewel: "Apology."—*The Popish Authority.*

They will say to this, I guess, civil princes have learned to govern a commonwealth and to order matters of war, but they understand not the secret mysteries of religion. If that be so, what, I pray you, is the Pope, at this day, other than a monarch or a prince? or what be the cardinals, who must be no other nowadays but princes and kings' sons? What be they else at this present in the Pope's kingdom but worklikely princes, but dukes and earls, gorgeously accompanied with bands of men, whithersoever they go; oftentimes also gaily arrayed with chains and collars of gold? They have at times, too, certain ornaments by themselves, as crosses, pillows, hats, mitres, and palls; which pomp the ancient Bishops, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Ambrose never had. Setting these things aside, what teach they? what say they? what do they? how live they—I say not as may become a bishop, but as may become a Christian man? Is it so great a matter to have a vain title, or by changing a garment only, to have the name of a Bishop?

Why, I pray you, may Caiaphas and Annas understand these matters, and may not David and Esekias do the same?

C. 16, 17. For tho' we have departed from that church, which these men call Catholic, and by these

means get us envy amongst them that want skill to judge, yet is this enough for us, that we have gone from that church which had power to err; which Christ, who cannot err, told so long before; and which we ourselves did evidently see with our own eyes to have gone both from the holy Fathers, and from the Apostles, and from Christ his own self; and from the Primitive and Catholic Church; and we are come, as near as we possibly could, to the Church of the Apostles and of the old Catholic Bishops and Fathers. For we thought it meet to take the pattern of reforming religion, from whence the ground of religion was first taken; as with the ancient Father Tertullian: "Look, whatsoever was first, that is pure; and whatsoever is latter, that is corrupt." Why return we not to the pattern of the old churches? Why may we not hear amongst us at this time the same saying, which was freely pronounced in times past in the Council of Nice, with so many Bishops and Catholic fathers, and nobody once speaking against it * * * that is to say, hold still the old customs? When Esdras went about to repair the ruins of the Temple of God, he went not to Ephesus, although the most beautiful and gorgeous temple of Diana was there; and when he proposed to restore the sacrifices and ceremonies of God, he went not to Rome, although peradventure he had heard that in that place were the solemn sacrifices called Hecatombæ and others, and Numa Pompilius' ceremonial books; he thought it enough to follow the pattern of the old Temple.

Peter, Old and New.

Tell us, hath the Pope alone succeeded Peter? and wherein, I pray you? in what religion? in what office? in what piece of his life hath he succeeded him? What one thing (tell me) had Peter ever like unto the Pope, or the Pope like unto Peter? Except peradventure they will say thus: that Peter, when he was at Rome, never taught the gospel, never fed the flock, took away the keys of the kingdom of heaven, sate him down only in

his castle in S. John Lateran, and pointed out with his finger all the places of purgatory; or that he gave order to say masses in every corner; or that he mumbled up the holy service with a low voice, and in an unknown language; and that he hanged up the sacrament in every temple and on every altar, and carried the same about before him whithersoever he went, upon an ambling jennet, with lights and bells; and that he consecrated with his holy breath oil, wax, wood, bells, chalices, churches, and altars; and that he sold jubilees, graces, liberties, palls, * * * indulgences and pardons, * * * and that he called himself by the name of head of the church, Bishop of Bishops, alone most holy; or took on him the right over other folks' churches; or that he maintained wars; or that he, sitting in his chair, with his triple crown full of labels, with sumptuous gorgeousness, with his royal sceptre, with the diadem of gold, and glittering with stones, was carried about, not on a palfrey, but on the shoulders of men. These things, no doubt, did Peter at Rome in times past, and left them in charge to his successors, as you would say, from hand to hand; for these things be nowadays done at Rome by the popes, and be so done, as though nothing else ought to be done.

And now listen to Latimer, and hear what the Church of England spake in the day when her clergy were

> —no Sabbath drawlers of old saws
> Distilled from some worm-cankered homily,
> But spurred at heart with fiercest energy
> To embattail and to wall about their cause
> With iron-worded proof.

We imagine him as he is described on his trial before the Bishop of London.

Master Latimer, having a kerchief on his head, and a great cap, such as townsmen use, with two broad flaps to

button under his chin, wearing an old thread-bare Bristol frieze gown girded to his body with a penny leather girdle, at the which hanged by a long string of leather his Testament; and his spectacles, without case, depending about his neck upon his breast.

There is in him an extreme homeliness; often an even coarser vein, yet oftener the simple power of true eloquence; never affectation, never rant, never the rancid diatribe of a Spurgeon, but the power that moves the heart of men. He would not suit a fashionable modern church, but we must not so measure him.

Sermon on St. John Evangelist's Day.

LUKE ii, 8–12.

"And there were shepherds abiding in the field and watching their flock by night."

I shewed you yesterday, right worshipful, what was the occasion that Mary, the mother of Christ, came to Bethlehem; where it was prophesied he should be born.

The occasion was this, Octavius, being emperor over that great empire of Rome at that time, when Christ should be born, sent out a general proclamation that all countries underneath his dominion should be taxed. Now God intended another thing. Octavius sought but to fill his purse and make money; but God sought occasion to fulfill his prophecy.

A wonderful thing to consider the works of God! The emperor Octavius served God's purpose; and yet he knew nothing of him.

We have here to consider the great benefits of God, the Almighty Father, that it hath pleased him, thro' his great goodness and love which he bare toward us, who were his enemies, that it hath pleased him, I say, to

give unto us for our sakes his only Son into these miseries and calamities.

Now for to come to the knowledge of this benefit, you must consider, first: what he was before he was incarnate and made man, for when we know what he was before he was made man, then we know what he hath done for us.

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Now, let us go forward, and consider his extreme poverty. They came to Bethlehem where they could get never a lodging in no inn, and so were compelled to lie in a stable. Some will say now: oh, what a wicked city was this! what a cruel people was this! But when we consider all things well, we shall find that we be even as wicked as they were. For are not we given nowadays to covetousness, so that we regard not the poor and miserable people? Therefore, if thou wilt cry out upon the Bethlehemites, then cry out on thyself; for thou art as wicked, yea—more, more wicked than they were.

But I warrant you there was many a jolly damsel at that time in Bethlehem, yet amongst them all there was not one found that would humble herself so much as once to go see poor Mary in the stable, and to comfort her. No, no, they were too fine to take so much pains. I warrant you they had bracelets and vardingals; and were trimmed with all manner of fine raiment, like as there be many nowadays amongst us which study nothing else but how they may devise fine raiment; and in the same season they suffer poor Mary to lie in the stable; that is to say, the poor people of God they suffer to perish for lack of necessaries. But what was her swaddling clothes, wherein she laid the king of heaven and earth? No doubt it was poor gear; peradventure it was her kerchef, which she took from her head, or such like gear; for I think Mary had not much fine linen; she was not trimmed up as our women be nowadays; I think, indeed, Mary had never a vardingal, for in the old time women were content with honest and single garments; now they have found out these roundabouts.

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Now followeth in the text, "And there were shepherds." I pray you, to whom was the nativity of Christ first opened? To the Bishops, or great lords, which were at that time in Bethlehem? or to those jolly damsels with their bracelets, their vardingals, or with their roundabouts? No, no, they had too many lets to trim and dress themselves, that they could have no time to hear of the Nativity of Christ. But his nativity was revealed to the shepherds; and it was revealed unto them in the night time, when everybody was at rest; and here note the diligence of those shepherds; for if they had been deceitful fellows, that when their masters had put them in trust to keep their sheep, they had been drinking in the ale house all night, as some of our servants do nowadays, surely the angels had not appeared to them, to have told them this great joy and good tidings. Here by these shepherds all men may learn to attend upon their office and calling. For I tell you these poor, unlearned shepherds condemn many a stout and great learned clerk; for these had but charge over brute beasts, and the others have the cure over God's lambs, and yet they are so careless, yea—and most part intendeth not to feed the sheep but to be fed of the sheep. Indeed there be some ministers in England which do no good at all, and therefore it were better for them to leave the benefices and make room for others. Therefore let him not be ashamed to learn of these shepherds; God doth consecrate every vocation: that he that feareth God shall be acceptable, though he be a poor shepherd, or cobbler, that is not the matter.

And so it appeareth that we may not seek Christ in the glistering of this world, for what is so common as water? or bread and wine? Yet he promised to be found there, when he is sought with a faithful heart. So will you have Christ? Where shall you find him? Not in the jollities of this world, but in rags in the poor people. Have you any poor people in your town or city? Seek there among the rags, there shall you find him. But you must understand when I speak of poverty,

I speak not of this wilful poverty of the monks and friars; for that same was an hypocritical poverty, that same poverty was full of all manner of delicate things.

* * * * *

But I speak of the very poor and needy flock of Christ which have not wherewith to live in this world.

Now to make an end, consider what I have said how Christ was born, in what poverty and in what misery. Remember what manner of Saviour he is; namely a perfect Saviour, which healeth all our sorrows, when we believe in Him.

The Almighty God give us grace to live and believe so that we may attain to that felicity, which he hath promised by his Son our Saviour! To whom, with God the Father and the Holy Ghost, be honour world without end. Amen.

For the great age of Elizabeth and James, reaching to the time of Charles, we have Hooker, the statesman of the Church; Hall, the moralist: Donne, the pulpit scholar; and Jeremy Taylor, the saint and poet in one.

Hooker, to my mind, is, in many regards, the great type of the English Church; "no greater in learning, less subtle than Andrewes, less lofty than Cudworth." But he represents that stately, massive, harmonious mind which upbuilded it. The work of "Ecclesiastical Polity" remains to this day like the Pyramids, alone amidst the barren sands of church polemics.

It was a marvel even then. Clement VIII uttered what his age and ours must repeat. "There is no learning that this man hath not searched into; nothing too hard for his understanding; his books will get reverence

by age; for there is in them such seeds of eternity, that they shall last till the last fire shall consume all learning."

A quiet student in his parsonage, he pondered the idea of the Church, as builded on the Divine Law, until it grew not, as with the Roman, a mechanical, external fabric, nor with the Puritan, a formless faith, but a deep, large, Catholic structure. His first book unfolds the principle of Law; he traces it to God, and upturns the Calvinistic idea of an arbitrary will; his God is one of Law rooted in Holiness; he discourses of angelic law as if he heard the music of the spheres; then the law of man, rational, free; then the nature of all social institutions as rooted in law; then the Church as the perfection of social harmony. In the second book he overturns, with clear logic, the theory of the Puritan, demanding the rigid prescript word of Scripture. But here he opposes to it no traditionary theory of modern Oxford, no development notion of Newman; but a Church authority, subordinate to the Divine and clearly defined. The remaining books are the application of these principles. Everywhere is the same grandeur of thought. He cannot speak of a Church vestment, but he bases custom on law. Here and there are overstrained notions of sacramental grace, but in these he is never rigid, never vague, always large, always judicious. In that day of tradition and petty strifes he stood not as a Puritan, nor as Arch-Bishop Laud, a verbal Anglican, but a (Broad) Church-

man. Yet he is never a speculative thinker. He is English; he seeks the idea in its real form. It is a work for the Churchman to study in this day of fragmentary thought and party shibboleth. It is a work for the statesman and the jurist. The book rises like a cathedral, with the unity of one thought, yet in all the harmony of its vast proportions; every part finished, the solid stone wrought, as it towers up, into the richest tracery, and in every niche a statue. I think the style of Hooker the noblest in our language. "It is the very incarnation of his thought; if sometimes it is involved, artificial, yet it is a glorious art. Its great feature is majesty; yet it abounds with pathos, with delicacy, with the nicest, rarest touches of beauty. There is in him the sweep of an eagle, who never dashes at once upon his object, but soars as if he loved to soar, circling around the thought, gradually approaching, until at last he stoops to bear it away."

Hooker: Book First.

Now, if Nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether, though it were but for a while, the observation of her own laws; if those principal and mother elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our head should loosen and dissolve itself; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and by irregular volubility turn themselves any way as it might happen; if the prince of the lights of heaven, who now as a giant doth run his course unwearied, should, as it were, through

a languishing faintness, begin to stand and rest himself; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixtures, and the winds breathe at their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away, as children at the withered breasts of their mother, no longer able to yield them relief; what would become of man himself, whom these things do now all serve?

Appetite is the Will's solicitor, and Will is Appetite's controller.

We hope, therefore, that to reform ourselves, if at any time we have done amiss, is not to sever ourselves from the church we were of before. In the church we were, and we are so still.

Whatsoever is unto salvation termed necessary, all such things if Scripture did not comprehend, the church of God should not be able to measure out the length and breadth of that way wherein she forever is to walk. But as to those things, which are accessory hereunto, to alter is no otherwise to change that way, than a path is changed by altering only the uppermost face thereof; which be it laid with gravel, or set with grass, or paved with stones, remaineth still the same path.

They err, therefore, who think that of the will of God to do this or that there is no reason bridles his will.

But so it is, the name of the light of nature is made hateful with men; the star of reason and learning and all other such like helps, beginning to be no otherwise thought of than if it were an unlucky comet; or as if God had so accursed it, that it should never shine or give light in things concerning our duty any way toward him, but to be esteemed as that star in the Revelation, called

Wormwood; which being fallen from heaven, maketh rivers and waters in which it falleth so bitter, that men tasting them die therof.

Reform.

He who will take away extreme heat by setting the body in extremity of cold, shall undoubtedly remove the disease, but together with it the diseased too. The first thing, therefore, in skilful cures is the knowledge of the part affected; the next is of the evil which doth affect it; the last is not only of the kind, but also of the measure of contrary things whereby to remove it.

Hall is the moral essayist of that day; he is a satirist, a wit, but his gifts are hallowed by a saintly grace. His "Contemplations" and "Meditations" brim with conceits, but conceit is not there. His fancy is less gorgeous, less sustained than Taylor's; sharp, glancing, it sparkles over every homeliest object, finds sermons in stones, and subtle analogies in an insect; his wit is not broad, or slashing, like South, but keen, subtle, reflective.

Music by Night.

How sweetly the music sounds in this dead season; in the day-time it would not so much affect the ear; all harmonious sounds are advanced by a silent darkness. Thus the gospel never sounds so sweet as in the night of persecution, or in our own private affliction.

Hypocrites.

There are many kinds of hypocrites. Of all birds, the peacock makes the fairest shew, and the worst noise. This, indeed, is a hypocrite to the eye. There are others,

as the blackbird, that looks black and sooty, but sings well. This is a hypocrite to the ear. Others please us much both in shew and voice, but are unpleasant in their carriage and condition, as the popinjay, whose colours are beautiful, and notes are delightful, yet it is apt to do mischief in scratching and biting any hand that comes near it. For me, let my profession agree with my words, my words with my actions, my actions with my heart.

Winnowing.

See how in the winnowing of the wheat the fullest and largest grains always lie the lowest, and the lightest take up the highest place. It is no otherwise in reality. They who are most humble are fullest of grace, and oftentimes they are most conspicuous who have least substance.

Conscience.

It is said of the elephant, that, aware of his own deformity, he cannot endure to see his own face in the water, but seeks for troubled and muddy channels. This we see well moralized in men of an evil conscience, who know their souls so filthy they dare not so much as view them, but shift off all checks of their former iniquity with a number of vain excuses.

Insects and Men.

When I look upon these flies and gnats, let me reflect what am I to my Infinite Creator more than these? And if these had reason, why would they not expostulate with their Maker why they are only such; why they live to so little purpose, and die without notice and use? I will thank my God for what I am, for what I have; and never quarrel with him for what I want.

Donne is at once the sublimest, the most touching, yet most grotesque of orators. We wonder as we read,

how such sermons could be listened to, mosaics full of rabbinical fancies, sprinkled with Latin, stuffed with oddities; yet, at the next turn we are bowed in tears and awe by some grand sentence out of a heart "baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

St. Dunstan's.

In the house where we stand now, the house of God and of his saints, God affords us a fair beam of this consolation in the phrase of this text also, "they were dead." How applicable to you in this place is that which God said to Moses: "Put off thy shoes, for thou treadest on holy ground." Put off all confidence, all standing, all relying on worldly assurances, and consider on what ground you tread; on ground so holy, as that all the ground is made of the bodies of Christians, and therein hath received a second consecration. Every puff of wind within these walls may blow the father into the son's eyes, or the wife into the husband's, or his into hers, or both into the children's, or the children's into both. Every grain of dust that flies here is a piece of a Christian; you need not distinguish your pews by figures; you need not say I sit within so many of such a neighbour, but I sit within so many inches of my husband's, or wife's, or child's, or friend's grave.

Faith.

As the soul is infused by God, but diffused over the whole body, and so there is a man, so faith is infused from God, but diffused into our works, and so there is a saint. Practice is the incarnation of faith; faith is incorporated in a body, by works.

Ignorant and Lettered Sin.

Truly when a weak or ignorant man departs into any vicious way, tho' in that case he do adhere to the enemy, and do serve the devil against God, yet he carries away,

but a single man, and serves but as a common soldier; but he that hath good parts and a good education carries a regiment in his person, and arms and ammunition for a thousand in himself.

Conversion.

A house is not clean, tho' all the dust be swept together, if it lie still in a corner, within doors; and it is not clean neither, tho' the dust be thrown out, if there hang cobwebs around the walls, in how dark corners soever; the conscience is not clean, tho' the sins be cast upon God's mercy, by the merits of his Son, if there remain in all, but a cobweb, a little lust, or sinful delight in the memory of those sins which I had formerly committed.

Heaven and earth are a musical instrument; if you touch a string below, the motion goes to the top; any good done to Christ's poor members upon earth, affects Him in heaven.

We cannot omit Cudworth, the greatest name in elder philosophy. Two sermons only are printed, but the first of these has no fellow in English divinity. We may read it a hundred times, when wearied with theological word fights, and it bears us into a purer ether, a serener air. It has thought enough, and splendor of word to set up a hundred Melvilles.

We have much inquiry concerning knowledge in these latter times. There be many that speak of new glimpses and discoveries of truth, of dawnings of gospel light, and no question but God hath reserved much of this for the very evening and sunset of the world; but yet I wish we could meantime see that day to dawn, as the apostle speaks of that daystar to arise in men's hearts.

Ink and paper can make us never Christians, can never beget a new nature, a living principle in us, can never form Christ, or any true notion of spiritual things in our hearts. Cold theories and maxims, dry disputes, bare syllogistical reasonings, could never yet of themselves beget the least glimpse of true heavenly light, the least sap of saving knowledge in any heart.

Would we know whether we know Christ aright, let us consider if the life of Christ be in us. We are nowhere commanded to pry into these secrets, but the wholesome counsel given us is this, "to make our calling and election sure." God's everlasting decree is too dazzling an object for us to set our eyes upon. It is far easier and safer for us to look upon the rays of his goodness, as they are reflected in our hearts, and there to read the mild and gentle characters of God's love to us, in our love to him and hearty compliance in his will, as it is safer for us, if we would see the sun, to look upon it here below in a pail of water, than to cast up our daring eyes on the body of the sun itself, which is too radiant and scorching for us.

Let us not therefore make this our first attempt toward God and religion to persuade ourselves of these everlasting decrees; for if at our first flight we aim too high, we shall haply but scorch our wings and be struck back with lightning, as those giants of old that would needs attempt to assault heaven. The way to obtain a good assurance of our title to heaven, is not to clamber up by a ladder of our own ungrounded persuasions, but to dig as low as hell by humility and self-denial.

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When our heart is once turned into a conformity with the word of God, when we feel our will perfectly to concur with his will, we shall then presently perceive a spirit of adoption within ourselves, teaching us to say, Abba, Father.

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The great mystery of the gospel is to establish a godlike

frame and disposition of spirit in the hearts of men; not only to cover sin by spreading the purple robe of Christ's death and suffering over it, while it still remaineth in us with all its filth and noisomeness unremoved; but to cleanse and free us from it.

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What then! must we say that though he be willing, he is unable to rescue his crucified son now bleeding on the cross; then must sin be more powerful than God. No, surely there is a weakness and impotency in all evil, but a masculine strength and vigor in all goodness. Is God powerful to kill and destroy, to damn and torment? and is he not powerful to save, nay, it is the sweetest flower in the garland of his attributes, the richest diadem in his crown of glory that he is mighty to save, and this is far more magnificent than to be styled mighty to destroy. For that, except it be in a way of justice, speaks no power at all, for the root of all power is goodness.

Or must we say, lastly, that God is indeed able to rescue us out of the power of sin and Satan, but yet sometimes to exercise his absolute authority, he delights rather in plunging wretched souls down to infernal night and everlasting darkness. What shall we then make of the God of the whole world? Nothing but a cruel and dreadful Erinnys, with curled fiery snakes about his head, and firebrands in his hands.

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O divine Love! the sweet harmony of souls! the music of angels! the joy of God's own heart! the very darling of his bosom, the source of true happiness! the pure quintessence of heaven! that which reconciles the jarring principles of the world, and makes them all chime together; that which melts men's hearts into one another. Let us express this sweet, harmonious affection in these jarring times, that so, if it be possible, we may turn the world into better music. Let us follow truth in love. It is not wrangling disputes that are the mighty

pillars that underprop the truth; if we would underset it with the holiness of our hearts and lives, it should never fail.

For truth is great, and stronger than all things; all the earth calleth upon truth, and the heaven blesseth it. All works tremble and shake at it. The truth endureth, and is always strong; it liveth and conquereth for ever more. It is the strength, kingdom, power, and majesty of all ages. Blessed be the God of Truth!

And what shall we say of Jeremy Taylor? We can add nothing, but only write down our love and reverence. He is the very type of English goodness. It is not for theology that we read him, although he is a noble instance of the semi-Arminian of his day, acute, learned, yet of the broadest sympathies. But it is in the "Life of Christ," the "Holy Living and Dying," and the "Sermons" that we read him. Poetic fancy, quickened by love, and warmed by a meditative thought, that "sleeps and broods on his own heart," are his graces. It is false to call him the "Shakespeare of divines"; he has nothing of Shakespeare but his knowledge of the human soul, his strength, his dramatic expression. Nor is he the "Cicero of the pulpit." His is a beauty most artless, always drawing you to the spiritual heights above. His long sentences glide on, not sweeping as Hooker's, but gentle, suggesting new relations of the thought, playing with rich fancies, and then gathering all into some solemn conclusion. We retire into his sentences as into the long aisles of some open church, where we may kneel and pray. We wind along as in

the ascending steps of a tower, where at each flight we pause and look out of a window, here a sunny slope, and next the spires of a far city, there the glimpse of the ocean, and there a river, sleeping in sunshine, and on its bank a group of happy children.

For so I have seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds, but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest than it could recover by the vibration and frequent weighing of his wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air, about his ministers here below. So is the prayer of a good man.

All the succession of time, all the changes in nature, all the varieties of light and darkness, the thousand thousands of accidents in the world, and every contingency to every man, and to every creature, doth preach our funeral sermon, and calls us to look and see how the old sexton, Time, throws up the earth, and digs a grave where we must lay our sins or our sorrows, and sow our bodies, till they rise again in a fair or in an intolerable eternity.

Thus nature calls us to meditate of death by those things which are the instruments of acting it; and God by all the variety of his providence makes us see death everywhere, in all variety of circumstances, and dressed up for all the fancies and expectation of every single person.

* * * And how many teeming mothers have rejoiced over their swelling wombs, and pleased themselves in becoming the channels of blessing to a family, and the midwife hath quickly bound their heads and feet, and carried them forth to burial. * * *.

You can go no whither but you tread upon a dead man's bones.

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But so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and at first it was fair as the morning, and full with the dew of Heaven as a lamb's fleece; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness, and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age; it bowed the head, and broke its stalk, and at night having lost some of its leaves and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and outworn faces. The same is the portion of every man and every woman.

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Eternal God, Almighty Father of men and angels, by whose care and providence I am preserved and blessed, comforted and assisted, watch over me in my sleep, and whether I sleep or wake, let me be Thy servant. Be Thou first and last in all my thoughts, and the guide and continual assistance of all my actions. Preserve my body, pardon the sin of my soul, and sanctify my spirit. Let me always live holily and soberly; and when I die, receive my soul into Thy hands!

We may well cherish some knowledge of this old divinity; that with our poor efforts to reproduce the costume of the past, we may gain, besides its traditions, its mysticism and its quaint grace, the secret of its true and lasting strength. Our aim should not be to imitate, but to learn the Christian, the English heart, which can

create not another 17th century, but a 19th century as strong, as wise, as fervent, as living, and which shall speak not theirs, but other words as the spirit giveth utterance.

Written in a Volume of Latimer's Sermons.

Chieftains of England's hero race! whose life
  Wrestled for Christ, and in the burning flame
  Walked unconsumed! Still have we kept your name,
But where the spirit that shall edge our strife?
Within our halls to-day your armor hangs,
  The rusted pride of the old battle-field,
  The empty helm, the sleeping spear and shield;
While ever and anon an echo clangs,
As if your stalwart hands the war-note pealed,
  Then dies away, a hollow funeral wail.
  Dwarfs of a little day! that heavy mail,
That sword of God our lean arms cannot wield,
  Only we view, awe-struck, the statue vast,
  And giant thews of a forgotten Past.

E. A. W.

CHAPTER IX.

FRANCIS BACON.

THE name of Bacon stands alone, among the leaders in the great age of Elizabeth, not merely as that of one who has made England the home of letters and eloquence, but who belongs to the world. It was his genius that opened the pathway of modern science; and although it has gone far beyond his beginnings, he shares "the immortality and continuance," in his own words, of the knowledge which wrought such wonders in our age. And yet it is a strange irony of history that one whom all rank among the *Dii Majores* should be even to-day a riddle alike in his personal character and in his scientific claims. In our own time we have had the most brilliant essays from the pen of writers like Macaulay, and elaborate critiques of his philosophy, from Playfair and Lewes.

I do not propose to give more than a passing sketch; it would be egotism should I attempt to give in any sense a thorough exposition of a subject that demands the range of science. My purpose is rather with the first great English *prose* writer. Yet I must be pardoned if I say that after thoughtful study I am persuaded that a large

part of the criticism, and even the eulogy, only proves how little he is understood. It seems to me one of the most needed inquiries, in a day when a materialistic school has so often usurped the name of his science, and a poor utilitarianism sneers at any education beyond that of popular literature, popular art, and popular morals, to show, in the spirit of Bacon himself, the unity and harmony of all real knowledge.

There are few great men in whom the scientific character seems so utterly apart from other features. We honor Bacon "the Chancellor of nature" more than the Chancellor of England. Yet I think an intellectual judgment of such a mind can hardly be true, without a glance at his biography. It is to me, I confess, a great relief that modern history, among the many juster verdicts which it has given on those much-abused names of the past, Cromwell and Macchiavelli, has of late done somewhat to wipe out the blots on Bacon's fame. I have always felt that the famous line of Pope,

> The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind,

was a paradox beyond belief. The highest reach even of intellectual power cannot be coupled with the base vices charged against the writer of the "Novum Organum." We ought not indeed to allow our reverence for his genius to blind us to his moral defects; but even the most unsparing critics owe him that justice which he begged in his last testament, where he bequeathed his fame to posterity, and

"after some time he passed away." I have read with care the several works on this subject, from the earlier charges to the brilliant and bitter essay of Macaulay; and, on the other side, the careful writings of Spedding, with the latest criticism of our time. My own conviction is, that each of the positive charges against him is groundless. It is clear that he was no traitor to his friend Essex, but did his best to shield him, and at last only fulfilled his duty as the legal servant of the court in the painful trial. It is clear that he was not, as Macaulay has caricatured him, the base sycophant of the court, or that a single proof can be found of his yielding to the king more than the royal prerogative of that day could claim. Nor is there any evidence that he accepted a bribe, or sold an office. The utmost that can be brought against him is, that he did not sternly reform the bad custom which had crept into the courts, of receiving gifts beyond the income of his office. It was a source of corruption which he should have cleansed. We have the right to blame him for his want of a higher morality, but no right to find in it a personal defilement. He was no better and no worse than most of the public men of his time. It was his misfortune at last to be chosen as the scapegoat, when the policy of the court put on one of its occasional fits of righteousness, and he was handed down to disgrace.

I believe that this is a fair estimate of his character. If we judge him by his time, we shall have much to ex-

cuse. It was a court where a royal despotism and a servile flattery were the fashion, even with good men, to a degree that amazes us to-day. We read with disgust the address of Bacon, in his "Advancement of Learning," to the pedant on the theme: "There hath not been since Christ's time any king or temporal monarch which hath been so learned in all literature and erudition, divine and human." Yet if we turn to some of the addresses of Cranmer to Henry, or even the style of the good Hooker, touching God's "servant Elizabeth," and "the happy days of her regiment," we may know the euphuism of the age.

Macaulay, in his keen essay on Macchiavelli, has shown the secret of the time when the same man could be a republican yet write the "Prince." But he might, we would think, be as just in his judgment of Bacon. Any who have studied his political essays must have felt, with all their insight into human nature, the Macchiavellian element in them, the astute statecraft, the maxims of an age when the public morality of England was far below our own. In this light we may say to the critics of Bacon, that they "are judging Manlius in sight of the Capitol." He can never be placed in the highest rank of those, like Plato and More, who blend with their intellectual gifts a moral grandeur. There was in him the clear, cold brain, such as may make the man of comprehensive science, the statesman like Cavour, the artist like Goethe, but with a far weaker share of the moral element.

We pass now to the life of Bacon as the reformer and leader of science. It is, indeed, the most wonderful feature of his career, that in the midst of such professional and public work he should have found leisure for studies so apart from his occupation. We read that from his early youth he had been absorbed in scientific enquiries, and even before thirty had sketched the outlines of a system, to which he gave the sounding name of the "Greatest Birth of Time." We cannot attempt here any full analysis of his works, but such a general view as will show his place and influence. He was a writer of most versatile genius, historian, essayist, as well as scientist. Were he to be regarded only as a master of English style, the "Advancement of Learning," and the "Essays" are the richest model of strength and grace in that fertile age. But we must first give study to the philosophical system on which his world-wide fame rests.

To understand the work of Bacon, then, we must study aright the state of philosophy in his day. It is a great mistake to claim, as has been so often done by his English followers, that the first step in the change from the abstract systems of the Middle Age, or the first discovery of scientific laws is due to him. The reign of the scholastic metaphysics had been already disputed. Yet science had only begun to feel its way toward the knowledge of its own capacities. The sole path in which it had thus far achieved any great result, that of astronomy, was one of mathematical hypothesis more than of exact

induction; and it was not, as Whewell has well said, till the laws of motion had been afterward proved by Galileo, that the heliocentric system could be called science. Astronomy itself till after Kepler was mingled with the fancies of astrology. In other fields of natural inquiry there was little or no advance. The metaphysical notions of substance and quality, matter and form, entered into every system.

There were fragmentary hints of science, and guesses at the dividing lines between the realms of pure reason and that of nature. But there was needed a comprehensive mind, large and keen enough to map out the whole *terra incognita* of knowledge, to show in this chaotic change from the Middle Age to the modern mind the method of real progress.

The scientific treatises of Bacon should be regarded as parts of one whole; and indeed in the Latin original they so appear. Of this stately building the "De Augmentis" forms the Propylæa, as a sketch of the state and right method of human knowledge in his day; the "Novum Organum" states the laws of scientific study; and the third and last part is a collection of various treatises on special branches of natural study. The two books on the "Proficience and Advancement of Learning," first written in English and published in 1605, give us, without doubt, the best idea of his comprehensive genius, as well as his masterly style. It is hard to find one writer in that early age who comes so near to the

perfect English utterance. He blends with a keen wit and a wealth of expression rising often to poetic fulness, that clearness of thought, that massive strength which kept him from any waste of words. The prose of Milton pours like a torrent over the banks, but with Bacon it rolls as a great river within its boundaries. Beyond almost any other writer he can express a weighty idea in a short sentence. He can be homely or sublime at will. His power of statement is admirable, and each illustration is an argument. He has the usual faults of his time, the tendency to verbal conceits, and a parade of classic learning. Yet we feel them less with him because they are lost in the greater breadth of his own thought.

No juster criticism, indeed, has been given us of the "bent of those times toward *copia* more than weight," the "rhetorical delicacies" of Car and Ascham, than Bacon in this very treatise. No writer has more avoided that first distemper of learning, when men study words more than matter, yet reached more nearly the union of matter with form.

But to pass now to the argument of the book. It is not easy to give a condensed sketch, because it contains at once so vast a range of learning for that time, yet at each step such subtle suggestions in special branches of knowledge. We may not regard his division of the powers of the mind or the departments of science to-day as thorough. But it is a complete picture of the state of knowledge then, and its insight into the methods of dis-

covery since, is at times a marvellous foresight. He opens with a discourse on the excellency of learning, taking up the several charges against it. The divine attacks human learning as leading to unbelief, especially because the contemplation of second causes weakens the dependence on God. Bacon answers, that true knowledge is not to be refused because of false. There is "nothing parcel of the world denied to man's inquiry." Although the knowledge of a first cause is the highest, yet as God works only by second causes, man must begin with these. "A little knowledge may lead to Atheism, but further proceeding bringeth back to religion." It is to be noted here that many passages like this are repeated in the "Essays"; and in almost all cases, they seem choice and favorite ideas of Bacon. He insists, again, in answer to the next class of objectors, that knowledge does not mar practical wisdom. The true scholar will never be a man of the antipodes, treading against the world we live in. There are several noble thoughts here on the real influence of men of learning, compared with the baser standard of the self-styled practical men.

Indeed, it is very hard to believe when we read Bacon's high and almost Platonic ideal of the scholar, that we are listening to a wily politician and a sordid judge. He rebukes the disposition of authors to ask favor of the great in the words, "Books should have no patrons but truth and reason." But now he passes from the defence of learning to its three special defects. He rebukes the

fantastical tendency of his time to spend too much on words, a disease which came in with the revival of letters and had affected English authors. He rebukes the *contentious* spirit, the vice of the School-men, leading to those "vermiculate" questions, that are like the spider's web, spun out of her own bowels, with no profit for real learning. But more than all he unmasks the third disease, that of *untruth*. Unlike modern philosophy, he holds that "Truth of being and truth of knowing are one, differing no more than the direct beam and the beam reflected." All knowledge, which rests on mere tradition, or things weakly warranted, legendary history, fanciful science, come under this head. Let not "Time, the Author of Authors, be deprived of his due, which is further and further to discover truth." Other errors are probed with the same keen hand. The false reverence of antiquity, or the love of novelty, is an idle excess. "*Antiquitas sæculi juventus mundi.*" "Those are the ancient times, when the world is ancient." But the greatest error of all is the mistaking the end of knowledge. And thus he concludes his first book by summing from the Word of revelation and the proofs of human history the dignity of learning; and most of all "in that whereunto man's nature doth most aspire, which is immortality." "The verses of Homer have continued twenty-five hundred years, or more without the loss of a syllable or letter. It is not possible to have the true pictures or statues of Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar; but the

images of men's wit and knowledge remain in books. Neither are they fitly to be called images, because they generate and cast their seeds in the minds of others": * * * and "if the invention of the ship was thought so noble, which carrieth riches from place to place, how much more letters, which, as ships, pass through the vast seas of time, and make ages so distant to participate of the wisdom, illuminations, inventions, the all of the other?"

In his second book, Bacon now enters on what he calls a "general perambulation of learning." All knowledge has three divisions, History, Poesy, Philosophy; corresponding to the faculties of Memory, Imagination, and Reason; and Divine Learning, like human, may be said to embrace History, Parables, Doctrine. Several critics, like Stewart, have called this division arbitrary. It certainly does not correspond to the classification of modern science; yet the classification does not essentially affect the worth of his reasoning. History is now regarded under four heads, Natural, Civil, Ecclesiastical, and Literary, the last of which is deficient. In regard to the history of nature, he counsels more attention to the irregular phenomena, "as it were bounding nature in her wanderings." "Small things discover great better than great discover the small," as Aristotle searches for "the nature of a commonwealth first in a family and the simple conjugations of man and wife, parent and child. Even so the nature of this great city of the world must

be first sought in small portions." Civil history in Bacon's time was little more than legend ; and his criticism shows the distance between his ideas and ours of historic science. His verdict on church history is excellent. "I would that the virtue and sincerity of it were according to the mass and quantity." In his remarks on poetry there is no thorough analysis. His saying is a fine one, that it "doth raise and erect the mind by submitting the shews of things to the desires of the mind, whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things." He has here, too, a keen critique, which our modern myth-hunters would do well to read, "that the fable was first and the exposition then devised."

But it is when Bacon comes to the province of reason, "the judicial place or palace of the mind," that we see the clearness of his analysis. He divides philosophy into divine, natural, and human. Before considering them, he remarks that as all these parts are "like branches of a tree, that meet in one stem," there should be one science, Philosophia Prima, which embraces the common principles of all.

It is not easy to know what was the exact province of this Baconian science. The instances he gives us are rather fanciful than real; as a coincidence between cumulative and distributive justice, and arithmetical and geometrical proportion ; the musical principle of a solution of discords as "alike true in affection" ; and "the delight of the quavering of a stop in music the same with

the playing of light on water." Yet the whole passage is full of suggestion. It opens a field, even yet scantily worked, of the metaphysics and physics, the unity of our mental and moral conceptions with those of sense, which might be our best antidote to the materialistic school of Bain.

In his view of *divine* truth Bacon recognizes mysteries beyond the contemplation of nature, or ground of human knowledge; and lays down the sober rule that we are not "to draw them down to our reason," but "to advance our reason to the divine light." In the sphere of Natural Philosophy he distinguishes "the mine and the furnace," the inquisition of laws and production of effects. Science is physical and metaphysical. Physic considers what is matter and therefore transitory; Metaphysic, what is form, and therefore abstracted and fixed. This distinction of matter and form is Aristotelian: it corresponds to our own of phenomenal and real. Physical science deals with efficient causes; metaphysical, with formal and final causes. He distinctly recognizes the sphere of metaphysical knowledge, and its benefit as teaching us the unity of truth, as well as the freedom of the mind above the material. But he censures the intrusion of metaphysics into the proper study of nature, in the inquiry into final causes; and thinks the method of Democritus truer in this respect than that of Plato or Aristotle, who mixed one his theology and the other his logic with physical science. It is with

striking insight that Bacon has anticipated Kant in classifying mathematics pure as a branch of metaphysics; and his remarks on geometry and arithmetic are worthy of full study. He passes now to the third division of *human* knowledge, or the study of man. All knowledge, he says, is one light, of which the natural is the direct ray, the divine the refracted, and the human the reflected. Human knowledge is but a portion in the continent of nature; and we should accept all such partitions as lines and veins, rather than sections and separations. The study of the mind should therefore be together with that of the body. In this part of his treatise Bacon has given us the anticipation of the methods of modern science. His observations on the meagre knowledge in his day of medicine, anatomy, and physiology are striking. The substance of the mind is not to be known by philosophy, but its powers of understanding and reason, will, appetite, and affection are the true objects of knowledge.

From this he passes to the practical side of human knowledge. He considers first the exercise of the rational, second of the moral powers. The arts of intellectual training are invention, judgment, memory, tradition. Under the head of invention comes the discussion of the true nature and place of induction. Bacon maintains that the induction of Aristotelian logic is fruitless so far as real knowledge is concerned. Middle propositions cannot be deduced from general principles *in subject of*

nature by syllogistic reasoning. The result is only that of the academies, the denial of certainty in objects of sense. Induction in science and judgment are the same art. Logic has its true sphere in reasoning from general principles to particulars in analytics.

We should give much time to this treatise, because it alone shows us the harmony of Bacon's philosophy. The misconceptions of it have come from the fact that the "Novum Organum," which has only to do with the study of nature, has been so interpreted as to obscure all other parts of his system. We can now turn to the "Novum Organum," a shorter treatise, divided into concise aphorisms. He examines the method of scientific study. There are two mothods of reasoning, the *a priori*, which descends from abstract ideas to particulars, the *a posteriori*, which ascends from particulars to generals. Each has its true place. But for the investigation of nature the *a priori* method is useless. To begin with ideas of substance, quality, action, passion, can only end in abstract results. Science must begin with the real objects. It is on this then he rears his experimental method, or Induction. The process is, first, the accumulation of all the facts; next, these must be compared to discover their form or the general and permanent quality. This inquiry does not concern *cause*, which is metaphysical, but only form. To find the form we begin by *exclusion*. Thus, if we seek the quality of transparency, we exclude porosity or fluidity, as the diamond is transparent yet solid. After

exclusions have been made, enough to determine the reckoning, one principle is assumed as the form, and we then reason from it synthetically to account by it for the phenomena. Such is the outline of the method. Bacon adds a comparative sketch of the various classes of facts. Some are of more value to determine the case.

But before passing to a summary of the Baconian philosophy, we should touch at least on his other writings, which deserve a fuller sketch If his scientific works had not made his name so great, these writings would have still given him a foremost rank among English masters of thought and style.

His mind is equally at home in the laboratory, or in the world of men; and, indeed, it is in all the same order of genius, the clear, keen, comprehensive brain. His "History of Henry VII" is by far the best piece of such writing in his time; it is not so Rembrandt-like a portrait as More's of Richard, but full of insight into English historic life, and a grasp of constitutional law. But for most readers it is in the "Essays" that he will live. In certain features they stand alone in this field of writing. There is nothing of the gay paradox of Montaigne, the sounding verbiage of Seneca, or the witty sophistry of Rochefoucauld. They express the "practical reason" of the English mind. Each sentence is beaten gold. One of his observations on men and manners is like a chalk outline by Michael Angelo. And as a model of English style, the "Essays" are unrivalled, although I think

they have less of stately eloquence than the "Advancement of Learning."

A little philosophy inclineth men's minds to Atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth them about to religion.

There be two false peaces or unities: one when the peace is grounded but in an implicit ignorance, for all colours will agree in the dark; the other, when it is pieced up on a direct admission of contraries on fundamental points, for truth and falsehood in such things are as the iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image,—they may cleave, but they will not incorporate.

Time is the greatest innovator, which moveth so round, that a froward retention of custom is as turbulent a thing as innovation.

Revenge is a kind of wild justice.

Adversity is not without its comforts and hopes. We see in needle-work and embroideries it is more pleasing to have a lively work on a sad and solemn ground, than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground.

Envy is as the sunbeams, which beat hotter on a bank, or steep rising ground, than upon a plot.

It is the nature of self-lovers, as they will set an house on fire, and it were but to roast their eggs.

It is good to commit the beginnings of all great actions to Argus with his hundred eyes, and the ends to Briareus with his hundred hands.

Crafty men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them.

There is but one case when a man may commend himself with a good grace, and that is in commending virtue in another, if it be such whereunto himself pretendeth.

Men rather discharge their minds than impart their minds.

Neither is money the sinews of war, when the sinews of men's arms in base and effeminate people are failing.

It is well, when nobles are not too great for sovereignty nor for justice, and yet maintained in that height, as the insolency of inferiors may be broken upon them before it come too fast upon the majesty of kings.

The best composition and temperature is to have openness in fame and opinion, secrecy in habit, dissimulation in seasonable use, and a power to feign, if there be no remedy.

If we have understood the spirit of Bacon's philosophy in his own writings, we are ready not only to give it its true worth in that age of dawning science, but to see the strange mistake of so many critics, even to our own day. It has been the fashion of the whole school of sensuous philosophy, since the time of Condillac to Mill and Bain, to claim him as the great mind to whom the modern world owes its emancipation from the *a priori* methods of metaphysics, and the beginning of the inductive science. We hear this claim repeated in a more popular way by a class of writers, of whom Macaulay is the most popular oracle, who love to talk of the philosophy of common-sense and the age of practical knowledge. Nor is it less strange that this one-sided view of the Baconian method has been very largely allowed by the opponents of the sensuous school. We might expect it from a fierce champion of Aquinas like De Maistre. But it is the

criticism of a sober historian like Ueberweg, who distinctly names Bacon as the father in philosophy of Hobbes and the large family of materialists. We cannot indeed call it so sad that he should be so slandered in his intellectual as he was in his moral fame; but it is a sore wrong, and it is quite as due to him to defend him against treachery to spiritual truth as treachery to his friend Essex.

It was the design of Bacon in that early time of revival in art and science "to make," in his own words, "a small globe of the intellectual world, with a note and description of those parts which seem not constantly occupate, or not well converted by the labour of men." He pointed out the mutual relations of all knowledge, and the laws that must govern the scholar in the study of each. And as his own special aim lay in the study of nature, and he saw clearly the boundless field just opening for discovery in its hitherto unknown truth, he sought to clear away the mistakes of the older philosophy in this direction, and found the true method of experiment.

He was, in his own phrase, an "Instaurator of Science." This is his just claim. The fruit of his genius is in the whole gathered history of science since his time. His *opus majus*, greater than his own written treatises, is in the work of Newton, Davy, Lagrange, Agassiz, Faraday. He was, to borrow again his prophetic words, "the servant of posterity"; and posterity has acknowledged him as the master, whose principles have guided them to the

knowledge of the stars, the marvels of chemistry, the secret of the *Kosmos*. That title of the most comprehensive work of our time gives us the nearest likeness to Bacon. It was his task, like Humboldt, to show the unity and harmony of all the manifold aims of human knowledge with the great whole of the Divine Maker, the correlation of forces in the search after truth, which is as true a law in the history of the mind as it is in nature. None can rob him of this praise. There are men of science at this day, who deny his exact knowledge in much of his own experimental detail. It is true that, although no poor student of nature, many have surpassed him in their special inquiries. The habit of large generalization is seldom found together with skill in the microscope. His well-known doubt as to the truth of the Copernican theory proves his lack of thorough astronomical study, although we have the best evidence from his own words that his doubt was by no means a denial, but based on the fact, that it was as a mathematical hypothesis open to difficulties, which were indeed only met by later discoveries in physical astronomy. Without doubt, his own inductive method has been largely improved by science. Yet it is enough that for his day he opened the way. Indeed, in this respect he is far greater than Humboldt; for he not only gives us a larger map of human knowledge than the survey of nature by the great German, but he wrote at a time when there was needed the genius to explore the unknown more than to gather the known.

His task in science was that of the discoverer who started in his small caravel from the port of Palos across the mysterious ocean, and planted the first colony of a new world.

In this light we can justly meet the often-repeated mistakes as to the philosophy of Bacon. To say that he is the author of an inductive science which has taken the place of metaphysical study, is to misunderstand the character of both. The object of the Baconian method, it is clear from his own statements and the drift of his reasoning, is the exact knowledge of the world of nature. It is as absurd to think that the science which explores the unseen world of thought, the nature of God, the laws of the mind and the moral being, has been displaced by this just thinker, as to say that the progress of chemistry has set aside civil history. Each has its sphere. There is a method in the study of the mind. There is a method in the study of the outward phenomena. We need only turn to the writings of Bacon to show that his purpose was to distinguish them, to guard against the intrusion of scholastic notions into the field of fact. "The wit and mind of man, if it work upon matter, which is the contemplation of the creatures of God, worketh according to the stuff, and is limited thereby; but if it work upon itself, as the spider worketh his web, then it is endless, and brings forth indeed cobwebs of learning, admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit."—"Advancement of Learning," B. 1, p. 40.

It was against such "subtle, idle, unwholesome, and vermiculate questions" as had usurped the place of "good and sound knowledge" he wrote. But that he in no sense denied the worth of metaphysical study, or the truths it sought, is as plain from another sentence. "For Metaphysic, we have assigned unto it the inquiry of formal and final causes, which assignation as to the former, may seem negatory and void, of which opinion we will take this hold, that the invention [discovery] of forms is of all other parts of knowledge the worthiest to be sought, if it be possible to be found. As for the possibility, they are ill discoverers that think there is no land when they can see nothing but sea. But it is manifest, that Plato in his opinion of ideas, as one that had a wit of elevation situate as upon a cliff, did descry, that forms were the true objects of knowledge, but lost the real fruits of his opinion, by considering of forms as absolutely abstracted from matter, and not confined and determined by matter, and so turning his opinion upon Theology, wherewith all his Natural Philosophy is infected. But if any shall keep a continual watchful and severe eye upon action, operation, and the use of knowledge, he may advise and take notice, what are the forms, the disclosures of which are fruitful and important to the state of man." Nothing can be clearer than the distinction here. Bacon held, as all true science holds to-day, that the study of all the problems of knowledge must begin with the facts, and that in this method an exact induc-

tion in the range of physical fact would teach us the border line of sure metaphysical knowledge. But he did not hold fruitlessness of all knowledge beyond the physical. He declares "that Physic doth make inquiry only as to the material and efficient causes," but that the science, "which supposeth further in nature a reason, understanding, and platform," is "of all the worthiest to be sought." We have here the true difference between him and the whole school of Agnostic science, which claims that the sphere of an inductive science is the only one, and its result the utter denial of knowledge beyond the phenomenal. This clear definition of the sphere of physical and metaphysical inquiry settles the vexed question concerning his method.

It has been often claimed, that Bacon set aside the syllogistic logic of Aristotle, and put in its stead the inductive reasoning. This is a mistake. He rejected the syllogism as a fruitless process in scientific discovery. It was useless to reason as Aristotle had done, from the general conception of a circle to the motion of the planetary bodies, without the exact physical induction of the facts; and thus he complained that the Greek sage had "made the world out of his categories." Natural philosophy had been only a guesswork. But he was so far from rejecting the syllogism in its true place, that he has himself clearly defined its worth. "There are two ways of investigating truth: One from sense and particulars rises to general axioms, and from these settled principles judges

and finds middle axioms. The other from sense and particulars calls out axioms by rising constantly and by degrees, and at last arrives at generals. This is the sure way." Again, "there being but four kinds of demonstration, that is, by the immediate consent of the mind in sense, by induction, by syllogism, and by congruity, every one of these hath certain subjects in the matter of sciences, in which respectively they have their chiefest use; and certain others from which they ought to be excluded." Had the idea of Bacon been clearly grasped, the confused notions of his method would have been easily escaped. Induction is not a natural process, substituted for an artificial machine of Aristotelian logic. It is simply the cautious process by which, in experimental inquiry we gather, compare, and verify the facts to reach a conclusion in its nature empiric and nothing more. Syllogism is the intellectual process by which we apply the general and known to the particular. It is the explicit form in which all reasoning is logically cast; and we may as well talk of grammar as artificial, because, like Molière's *bourgeois gentilhomme*, we have been using grammar in our speech without knowing it, as call the syllogism an invention of the schools.

But I will not enlarge on what Whately has long ago shown in his "Logic." I wish only to point out the defect in the argument of Whately himself, as it touches the Baconian method. Induction is, he insists, from the idea of the formal logic in English schools, merely

the collecting of the facts from which we afterward reason. We can put any induction into syllogism, by supplying the major premise. Undoubtedly. But this does not in the least explain why Bacon refused the syllogistic and preferred the inductive form. It is readily understood from his own sentence, already cited. The "sure way" in experimental science was that which "rises constantly and by degrees and at last arrives at generals." I cannot better state it than in the words of Mr. Lewes, because his admission reveals the very point where, as I conceive, the positive philosophy he teaches is utterly in contrast with the conclusions of Bacon. "It is in the way the major premise is established that we must seek the real difference between the syllogistic and inductive methods: and that difference is between *a priori* and *a posteriori*. Every one who has read Bacon, knows that his scorn for the syllogism is not as a form of ratiocination, but as a means of investigation." This is to touch the question with a needle. It was not the function of physical science to search after the truths only knowable by the *a priori* or synthetic reasoning; it had nothing to do with a final cause, substance, unity, infinity, but only with efficient cause, phenomena, relativity, succession. On this path it could not reach demonstration in the absolute sense, but only the certitude of experience. A logic, therefore, which by its very structure dealt with universals, was always misleading. The metaphysics of the schools, when they introduced the notions of abstract

form, essence, quiddity, and the like, into the science of nature, must end in barren theory. This is the true position of the scientist. But it was not Bacon's design in this to deny the function of *a priori* reasoning in its own sphere. It is the right place of logic, because it deals with universals, to be the *organum* of reason in all questions of deductive knowledge. Induction must give it its material, its groundwork of empiric fact; but the truths of the unseen world are beyond its province. Such was the design of Bacon.

And as his view was a just one as against the scholastic systems of his time, which forced their theories on science by a barren logic, so it is true against the science, which by the same dogmatic process forces its induction into the field of *a priori* thought. I do not know a more striking proof of this than in the criticism of Mill on the Baconian method. No one can deny that the inductive method as he announced it has been greatly perfected at the hands of science. Its range is larger, and its processes nicer at this day. But the chief objection of Mill is that Bacon "has left no room for the discovery of new principles by way of deduction at all." It is in the deductive sciences of mechanics, astronomy, optics, acoustics, he claims, that "the higher and middle principles are by no means derived from the lowest, but the reverse. In some of them the highest generalizations were those earliest ascertained with any scientific exactness; as, for instance (in mechanics), the laws of mo-

tion." Yet he grants that "these general laws had not at first the acknowledged universality which they acquired after having been successfully employed to explain many classes of phenomena, to which they were not originally seen to be applicable." Now, this very admission seems to me enough to prove the principle of Bacon. The Copernican hypothesis must wait, as we have said before, for the inductive test of physical astronomy. The application of geometry and algebra has led to a wide range of scientific discovery, yet in every case the generalizations have been corrected and verified by the inductive process.

We may now sum up our view of the great master of science, and his influence on the after-time. It is utterly to misread him, when he is classed with the school of sensuous or materialistic philosophy in England. There is nothing in his writings which allies him as a systematic thinker with the movement of Hobbes in the days of Charles, or with the yet later empiricism of Locke. All the doctrines of this school, and its results at home in the scepticism of Hume, or in France in the grosser theories of Cabanis, rest on the notion that our senses are the sole sources of knowledge, and our ideas only "transformed sensations." Whatever may be the question as to the fundamental truth or error of the "Essay on the Understanding," it is an analysis of the human mind, which sets aside by a subjective process all knowledge beyond experience. The philosophy of Bacon, as

we have seen, has nothing in common with such a method of study. It distinctly admits truths above sense. It acknowledges a reason in man that can know the ideas of cause, unity, infinity; and indeed we owe to Bacon that distinct use of the words *reason* and *understanding* which has been so laughed at in Coleridge. The only likeness between him and the school of Locke is their common dislike of abstract reasoning, and their appeal to experience. But the unlikeness is far greater. The one was destructive; the other constructive. The one made another theory of metaphysics; the other stood apart from all theory. The one ended in Hume and D' Holbach; the other in Newton. Nor do we see any likeness in Bacon to the later school of positive science, which has its leaders in Mill, Spencer, and Bain. Undoubtedly there are points of contact more than in the elder sensational school, from the fact that the growth of Positivism has been connected with the marvellous advance of physical discovery in our age. We claim, as the secret of modern science, that so far as it has verified its researches in the most fruitful fields of knowledge, in physiology, chemistry, geology, biology, it has kept the sober principle of Bacon.

Its influence has been vast, not only in the domain of outward nature, but in helping toward a sounder study of the mind; and in social ethics, by teaching, as Bacon did, the connection of soul and body. But for this very reason we can never allow Bacon to be classed with

the school of so-called positive science. There is not a single principle which they have advanced that is not the denial of his method. It is easy enough to find passages in his books that can be tortured into a resemblance to modern theories. We turn, for instance, to the chapter in which he says, that the "natural philosophy of Democritus and some others seemeth to me in particularities of physical causes more real and better inquired than that of Aristotle and Plato, whereof both intermingled final causes, the one as a part of Theology, and the other as a part of Logic." We might infer from this that Bacon was an Atomist of the Atheistic school, but turning to the next sentence we read: "Not because those final causes are not true, and worthy to be inquired, being kept within their own province, but because their excursions into the limits of physical causes hath had a vastness and solitude in that track." It was the limit of physical certainty that he wished to fix, not to deny the truth of a Divine Maker. In the same spirit Cudworth, the Platonist, accepts the atomic theory in physics. In the same spirit the author of the "New Chemistry" is careful to show that atoms are the ultimate point of his science, but cannot explain the unseen cause. And it is precisely so we find at every step the impassable chasm between the science of Bacon and the dogmas of the modern positivist. Mr. Spencer declares, that the last result of human knowledge is to find absolute being, a homogeneous passing into heterogeneous.

Bacon declares, that "in the entrance of philosophy, where the second causes, next unto the senses, do offer themselves to the mind, if it dwell and stay there, it may induce some oblivion of the highest cause; but when a man passeth on farther and seeth the dependance of causes and the works of Providence, then he, according to the allegory, will easily believe that the highest link of nature's chain must needs be tied to the foot of Jupiter's chair."

But I cannot close this sketch without a word on a point perhaps of more interest to the general mind than more scientific questions. It is not merely the mistake of the philosophy of Bacon by the physical dogmatists that claims our criticism, but the more popular notion, that he is the teacher of that self-styled wisdom of common-sense, of practical utility, of which we hear so much in our day. We are told that our age is specially marked by its scorn of speculative philosophy, its inventions of useful arts, its commerce, its real discoveries; and chief among the sages to whom we point as the fathers of the modern time is Bacon. I suppose that we are indebted for this popular idea of the inductive philosophy to the essay of Macaulay. Written in 1837, it has survived until now, and persons who gather opinions as easily as possible have taken from him at once their impressions of his bad character and his admirable practical spirit. It may seem immodest in me to call in question so great a master of rhetoric, but I can accept his opinion neither in

the one case nor the other. I am forced to say, that I look on his criticism of Bacon's philosophy as one of the most astounding pieces of glittering sophistry in the range of modern essays. It is the claim of this writer, borrowing a phrase from the "Novum Organum," that all mental and moral science from Plato and Aristotle to the day of the great Englishman was barren theory, and that the work of Bacon is to have given us the philosophy of fruit. Nor does he leave us in any doubt as to what he means by fruit. He does not even care for the science of Bacon as an addition to the intellectual wealth. Even the method of induction was for Macaulay nothing new; every man who had eaten mince-pie and learned the cause of his indigestion, could reason as well as Bacon. He passes in review the greatest names of speculative thought, and he tells us that the inventor of a good wine whey or of a hospital chair is more useful than the verbiage of Socrates. We may allow much for the rhetoric of a fine writer; we may not even hold a scholar responsible for such nonsense; but we must not allow the wisdom of Bacon to be debased by a utilitarianism so poor as this. What is utility? What is fruit? There is, as we have shown in our whole criticism, a noble spirit in the great author of the "Novum Organum," which led him beyond the word-battles of theory, into the aims of real knowledge; but none would have scorned more fully than he so vulgar a notion of utility as this.

I need only cite that most stately passage from the "De Augmentis" to show his idea of the useful. "Men have entered into a desire of knowledge, sometimes as a natural curiosity and inquisitive appetite; sometimes to entertain their minds with variety; and sometimes for ornament and reputation; and most times for lucre and profession; and seldom sincerely to give account of their gift of reason to the benefit and use of man; as if there were more sought in knowledge a couch whereon to rest a searching and restless spirit; or a terrasse for a wandering and variable mind to walk up and down with a fair prospect; or a tower of state for a proud mind to raise itself upon; or a fort on commanding ground for strife and contention; or a shop for profit or sale; and not a rich storehouse for the glory of the Creator and the relief of man's estate." There is nothing in such an idea of the useful akin to the spirit of Macaulay. It does not lose sight of the higher good of knowledge in its lower results. It can appreciate a wine whey, or a popular history of England, without placing them above the education of the mind and heart. We might indeed take Macaulay's view on its moral side, and show that the practical shrewdness he praises in the science of Bacon would have been quite likely to produce the mercenary character he so strangely assaults. We might go back to the memorable story of Plato in the court of Dionysius, and ask if a philosophy which kept the Greek true to his ideal purity is not more fruitful than one that

could range over nature, and prove the Chancellor of England and of England's thought an earthworm. But we will not accept his criticism on the one or the other. The utilitarianism he boasts is the fruit of an age which has turned the Baconian science into "a shop for barter and sale"; which believes, as a modern sage said, only in "the Trinity of bread, water, and fresh air"; which holds the eternal and immutable morality of "Poor Richard's Almanac"; which worships Bentham as its sage, Buckle as its historian, and Macaulay as its orator.

It is against such critics that I seek to justify the fame of the great Englishman. For us at least they shall not be the interpreters of him who was the first interpreter of true science in England.

[THE END.]

PERIODS IN THE HISTORY

OF THE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE.

The Anglo-Saxon Period, 600–1066.

From the consolidation of the Saxon dialects to the Norman Conquest. Noteworthy authors, or books, are:

Cædmon.
Beowulf.
The Saxon Chronicle.
Alfred.
Ælfric.

Good authorities on the language and literature of this period are. FREEMAN'S "Old English History" and "Norman Conquest"; GREEN'S "Making of England"; KEMBLE'S "Saxons in England"; HUGHES' "Alfred the Great"; MARSH'S "Origin and History of the English Language"; TEN BRINK'S "Geschichte der Englischen Litteratur"; GREIN'S "Bibliothek der Angelsächsischen Poesie"; GREIN'S "Dichtungen der Angelsächsen"; DIETRICH'S "Anglosaxonica"; KEMBLE'S "Anglo-Saxon Poetry"; THORPE'S "Analecta Anglosaxonica"; THORPE'S "Beowulf"; ALFRED'S "Orosius" and "Boetius"; EARLE'S "Two of the Saxon Chronicles"; "Saxon Leechdoms," ed. O. COCKAYNE; "Aelfric's Homilies," ed. THORPE.

The Anglo-Norman Period, 1066–1500.

LAYAMON'S "Brut," ed. Sir F. MADDEN.
"The Ormulum."
"The Ancren Riwle."
"The Surtees Psalter."
"Rhymed Chronicle" of ROBERT OF GLOUCESTER.
"Rhymed Chronicle" of ROBERT OF BRUNNE.

"Golias Poems" of WALTER MAPES.
WRIGHT—"Political Songs of England."
WRIGHT—"Specimens of Lyric Poetry."
WRIGHT and HALLIWELL—"Reliquiæ Antiquæ."
MORRIS—"Old English Homilies."
MORRIS—"Old English Miscellany."
MORRIS—"Specimens of Early English."
MORRIS—"Early English Alliterative Poems."
MORRIS—"Legends of the Holy Rood."
Early English Text Society's Publications.
OLIPHANT—"Old and Middle English."
EARLE—"Philology of the English Tongue."
MORRIS—"Outlines of English Accidence."
MORLEY—"Writers before Chaucer."
STUBBS—"Select Charters."
GUEST—"English Rhythms."
MALORY—"Morte d' Arthur."
ELLIS—"Early English Metrical Romances."
RITSON—"Ancient English Metrical Romances."
"Thornton Romances"—*Camden Society.*
LUDLOW—"Popular Epics of the Middle Ages."
PERCY—"Reliques of Ancient English Poetry."
RITSON—"Scotish Song."
RITSON—"Robin Hood Ballads."
SIR WALTER SCOTT—"Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border."
RINLOCK—"Ancient Scottish Ballads."
MOTHERWELL—"Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern."
CHILD—"English and Scottish Ballads."
Publications of the Chaucer Society.
Clarendon Press Edition of "Piers Plowman."
A. J. ELLIS—"Early English Pronunciation."
MORLEY—"English Writers from Chaucer to Dunbar."
WARD—"English Poets."
GOWER—"Confessio Amantis."
WARTON—"History of English Poetry."
BARBOURE'S—"Bruce."
GAWIN DOUGLAS—"Poetical Works."
JAMES I—"The Kinges Quhair."
SKEAT—"Specimens of Early English."
LORD BERNER'S "Froissart."
WYCLIF—"Translation of New Testament."

1500–1660.

Prose.

TYNDALE—"Translation of the Bible."
LATIMER—"Sermons."
JEWEL—"Apology."
CRANMER—"Revision of the Bible."
MORE—History, "Richard III."
ROGER ASCHAM—"Scholemaster."
SIR PHILIP SIDNEY—"The Arcadia," "The Defense of Poetry."
HOOKER—"Ecclesiastical Polity."
SIR WALTER RALEIGH—"History of the World."
FRANCIS BACON—"Essays," "Advancement of Learning," etc.
SPEDDING—"Life and Times of Francis Bacon"; "Letters and Life of Francis Bacon."
SELDEN—"Table Talk."
"The English Bible," Authorized Version.
FULLER—"Holy and Profane States."
CUDWORTH—"Works."
JEREMY TAYLOR—"Life of Christ," "Holy Living and Dying," "Sermons."
HERBERT—"The Temple."
HALL—"Contemplations and Meditations."
DONNE—"Sermons."
IZAAK WALTON—"Lives," "The Complete Angler."
SIR THOMAS BROWNE—"Religio Medici."
CLARENDON—"History of the Rebellion."
LORD HERBERT OF CHERBURY—"De Veritate," "Life of Henry VIII."

Poetry.

HAWES—"Pastime of Pleasure."
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VAUGHAN—"Poetical Works."
DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN—"Poetical Works."
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CAREW—"Poetical Works."
SUCKLING—"Poetical Works."
MARVELL—"Poetical Works."
HERRICK—"Hesperides."
MILTON—"Poetical Works."

Drama.

"Miracle Plays," "Mysteries"—Chester, Coventry, Towneley Collections.
BISHOP BALE—"Kynge Johan."
"Moralities—"Mariage of Wit and Wisdome."
JOHN HEYWOOD—"Interludes." ("The Four Ps.")
NICHOLAS UDALL—"Ralph Roister Doister."
GEORGE PEELE—"David and Bethsabe."
THOMAS KYD—"Spanish Tragedy."
CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE—"Doctor Faustus," "Edward II," "Tamburlaine," "The Rich Jew of Malta."
THOMAS DEKKER—"Old Fortunatus," "Satiro Mastix."
DEKKER and WEBSTER—"Westward Hoe."
JOHN MARSTON—"Eastward Hoe," "Insatiate Countess."
JOHN WEBSTER—"Duchess of Malfy," "White Devil."
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