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AN INTRODUCTION  
TO  
ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

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## P R E F A C E

THIS book is intended, not so much to give facts as to develop a taste for the best, ethically and æsthetically, in English Literature. There are certain intentional repetitions, necessary, I think, from the higher pedagogical point of view. The chapters on Shakspeare, the Augustan Age, and Tennyson, should be read carefully, rather than studied in the usual way. The dates are arranged with the conscious purpose of making the learner independent of their mere place on the printed page.

To Elmer Murphy, Litt. B. (Notre Dame), Ph.M. (Catholic University of America), I am indebted for valuable assistance, which assistance will be continued in the preparation of the succeeding volume, "An Introduction to American Literature in English."





# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

	PAGE
Early Saxon Writings. — Poems brought to England from the Homes of the Saxons, 460. — Cædmon, 670 . . . . .	1

## CHAPTER II

Before 600. — Early English Poems. — The Venerable Bede, 673. — The Reign of Eadgar, 958-75. — The Battle of Hastings, 1066 . . . . .	7
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

## CHAPTER II (*continued*)

The Gallo-Norman Romances. — Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Celtic Element. — Layamon's Brut, 1205. — The Ormulum, 1215. — Sir John Maundeville, 1356. — William Langland's Vision of Piers Plowman, 1362. — John Wyclif, 1380. — John Gower, 1393 .	14
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER III

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340 to 1400). — Lord Tennyson's lines on Chaucer. — French Period: Romaunt of the Rose (attributed to Chaucer). — The Complaynte unto Pite (1372). — The Book of the Duchesse (1369). — Italian Period (1373 to 1384). — Troilus	
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

	PAGE
and Criseyde. — The Complaynt of Mars. — Anelida and Arcite. — Boethius. — The Former Age. — The Parlement of Foules. — Chaucer's Wordes unto Adam. — The Hous of Fame. — English Period (1381 to 1389). — The Legend of Good Women. — The Canterbury Tales. — Occleve's Gouvernail of Princes (1411 or 1412). — John Lydgate (about 1433). — The Scotch Poets . . . . .	25
CHAPTER IV	
Early English Prose . . . . .	41
CHAPTER V	
Spenser . . . . .	50
CHAPTER VI	
Prose — 1561-1731 . . . . .	58
CHAPTER VII	
Spenser to Shakspeare, 1553-1593. The Beginning of the Drama. — Marlowe . . . . .	67
CHAPTER VIII	
Shakspeare . . . . .	75
CHAPTER IX	
Minor Dramatists and Ben Jonson. The Lyrists. — 1596-1654 . . . . .	96
CHAPTER X	
Milton and Dryden. From 1608 to 1700 . . . . .	110

# CONTENTS

ix

## CHAPTER XI

	PAGE
The Augustan Age. — Alexander Pope and his Time. — The beginning of Modern English History. — 1688– 1744 . . . . .	120

## CHAPTER XII

The Augustan Age. — Oliver Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson	142
------------------------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XIII

The Poetry of the Nineteenth Century. — Robert Burns, Wordsworth, Mangan, Aubrey De Vere . . . . .	165
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XIV

Poetry of the Nineteenth Century. — Lord Tennyson . . . . .	184
-------------------------------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XV

The Religious Poets. — The Pre-Raphaelites. — The Lighter Poets. — Sir Edwin Arnold, Lewis Morris, and Others . . . . .	207
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XVI

Modern Prose. — Burke. — Ruskin. — Carlyle. — Ma- caulay. — De Quincey. — Newman . . . . .	220
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER XVII

The Novel as a Form of Literary Expression. — The Novels of Shakspeare's Time. — Richardson to Father Sheehan. (1740 to 1901) . . . . .	231
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----



# ENGLISH LITERATURE

## CHAPTER I

*Early Saxon Writings. — Poems Brought to England  
from the Homes of the Saxons, 460. —  
Cædmon, 670.*

1. **Literature** is a verbal reflection of life. It is the only means by which we know how mankind in other times lived, thought, and acted. English literature includes all literature written in the English language.

In speaking of American literature, we must remember that it means many writings not in English. In South America and Mexico there are great authors who do not write the English language; and in Canada, which is part of America, there are numbers of writers of the French language deservedly celebrated.

2. **Before the Invention** of the art of writing, or when only a few wrote, literature was perpetuated by tradition; it was handed down from father to son. Then the memory of man was his library. It is said that the works of Homer were pre-

served in this manner among the Greeks for five hundred years. Later, symbolical characters, or letters, were impressed on various substances, such as the bark of trees and prepared leaves. About the year 1471, books began to be printed in England, and the monks, who had laboriously preserved great masterpieces of literature by writing and illuminating them with wonderful care and taste, now learned to print by the aid of carved blocks and hand-presses. Many of the terms now in use among printers may be traced to the printing-offices of the Benedictine monks, who eagerly made use of the new art. To the care of the monks we owe not only the preservation of the Bible, but of the Greek and Latin classics.

3. **Verse** was the earliest form of literature in all languages. The Old English poetry was not in rhyme as we understand it. Alliteration and accents were essential. There are generally four accents in a line; but sometimes there are more accented syllables, and sometimes more than three alliterations. This is the usual form of the alliteration:

“ Soft is the Silence of Silvery twilight.”

Two alliterations are in the first part of the line, and one in the second. Compound words are common — *whale's-path* and *swan-road* for the sea, *wave-horse* for a ship, *war-adder* for an arrow, and

*gold-friend of men* for king occur very often. The rules by which the oldest English poems are written allowed of the repetition of the same thought or fact several times. This is very common in the Hebrew ; for instance :

“ He shall make the deep sea to boil like a pot, and shall make it as when ointments boil.” — Job xli. 32.

and

“ I will speak and take breath a little : I will open my lips, and will answer.” — Job xxxii. 20.

4. **The Language** in which the earliest English poems were spoken or sung differs much from the English of to-day. It was brought from Jutland, or Saxony, by the tribes who landed in Britain and drove the Britons, whom they called Welsh, into Wales and Cornwall, and into the part of France called Brittany. The latter preserve a separate language and literature to this day. Later, the stories of the Britons crept into English literature. *The Tales of King Arthur*, on which Tennyson founded his great epic, was British, not Saxon. The Britons left us some Celtic words, of domestic import or the names of places : *avon* and *ex* (meaning water), *cradle*, *mop*, *pillow*, *mattock*, *crook*, *kiln*, and a few others. Saxons probably married British wives, and hence we have the domestic British terms ; but the majority of the Britons fled, leaving the land to the Saxon conqueror and his language.

5. **The First English Poems and the Epic "Beowulf"** were doubtless composed long before the seventh century, and taken from the continent to England in the memory of Saxon bards. *Beowulf* was reduced to writing in the eighth century by a monk of Northumbria. *The Song of the Traveller*, the earliest poem, enumerates the singer's experiences with the Goths. *Deor's Complaint* is a sad story of one who is made a beggar by war; it speaks of dumb submission to the gods. *The Fight at Finnsburg* and *Waldhere* are, with *Beowulf*, all the poems or parts of poems brought to England from the homes of the Saxons. These fragments and the epic of *Beowulf* may be studied with the help of an Anglo-Saxon grammar. *Beowulf* is the story of a ferocious monster called Grendel. It was sung in parts by the warriors at their feasts, each chanting a part. This monster Grendel, like the dragons of the fairy-tales, had the habit of eating human flesh. He harassed Hrothgar, thane of Jutland, appearing in the banquet-hall and devouring any guest that suited his fancy. Beowulf of Sweden sails to Jutland to assist the unfortunate king, and succeeds in killing the monster. *Beowulf*, however, no more shows the worst spirit of the Saxon pagan than Sir Edwin Arnold's poem, *The Light of Asia*, shows the selfishness of Buddhism. The Northumbrian Christian who transcribed it in 3184 alliterative lines put the mark of his finer and gentler thoughts upon it. To under-



stand something of the spirit of the Teutonic tribes that began to make England, one might read Longfellow's *Skeleton in Armor*, and *The Invasion* by Gerald Griffin, and *Ivanhoe*, by Sir Walter Scott. In the last occurs the famous dialogue between Gurth and Wamba on the growth of the Norman, or corrupt Latin, element in the English language.

6. **About the year 670**, the first entirely English poem was written by Cædmon. It is a poetical paraphrase of the Old and the New Testaments. It was written in Yorkshire, on a wind-swept cliff, in the abbey presided over by St. Hilda, a religious of noble blood. Cædmon was an elderly servant of the abbey, and when, after the feast, he was called on to sing in his turn, over his cup of mead, with the other servants, he refused because he had heard no songs that were not of cruelty and in praise of evil passions. One night he crept away from the table, sad because the others jeered at him, and went to sleep in the cow-shed; and a voice in his dream said to him, "Sing me a song!" Cædmon answered that he could not sing; for that reason he had left the feast. "You must sing!" said the voice; "sing the beginning of created things." Cædmon sang some lines in his sleep about God and the creation. He remembered these lines when he awoke. The Abbess Hilda, believing that his gift must come from God, had him taught sacred history, and he became a monk. Cædmon's paraphrases are full of the poet's

individuality. His description of the unholy triumph of Satan when he succeeds in tempting Eve is as striking as any passage in Milton's poem, *Paradise Lost*, on the same subject. Cædmon's simplicity, naturalness, and deep religious feeling cause this ancient poem to be read and quoted by scholars to-day. It is said that the author died in 680,— a date which is also given as that of the death of St. Hilda, his friend and patroness. Cædmon gave the English a taste for the Old and the New Testaments. Cædmon's poems suggested to Milton the great epic, *Paradise Lost*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Brother Azarius' *Development of Old English Thought*.

## CHAPTER II

*Before 600.* — *Early English Poems.* — *The Venerable Bede, 673.* — *The Reign of Eadgar, 958-75.* —  
*The Battle of Hastings, 1066.*

7. *Judith*, a paraphrase of the Scripture story, is the next important poem after *Beowulf*. Mr. Sweet, a great authority on Old English, or Anglo-Saxon poetry, says that this poet surpasses both Cædmon and Cynewulf in constructive skill and in command of his foreign subject, and that he is not inferior to them "in command of language and metre." The author of *Judith* and the date of its composition are unknown. Only about a quarter of the poem has been preserved. The three cantos, however, are very effective. The author throws himself into the spirit of the conflict between the Hebrews and the Assyrians. *Judith* has none of the sympathetic touches which make *Beowulf* seem closer to humanity; it is a poem of blood and war. The descriptions of the banquet of Holofernes, of the fear of the Assyrian courtiers who do not dare to wake their king, and of the return of Judith triumphant, are grandly done. The picture of the battle between the Hebrews and the Assyrians is very graphic :

“Linden-shields curved, that a little before  
 Had suffered the scoff and the scorn of the stranger,  
 The hiss of the heathen; hard was the guerdon  
 Paid the Assyrians with play of the ash-spears,  
 After the host of the Hebrew people,  
 Gonfalon-guided, onward had gone  
 Against the camp. Then they with courage  
 Sharply let fly the showers of shafts,  
 Battle-adders from bows of horn,  
 Stoutest of arrows; loudly they stormed,  
 The warriors wrathful, winging their spears  
 At the horde of the hardy; the heroes were ireful,  
 The dwellers in land, ’gainst the direful race;  
 Marched the stern-souled ones, the stout of heart  
 Fiercely o’erwhelmed their long-standing foemen,  
 Drowsy with mead; then drew they with hand  
 Forth from their sheaths their finely-decked swords,  
 Trusty of edge; tirelessly slew they  
 The Assyrian chosen, champions all,  
 Nerved with malice; none did they spare  
 Among the myrmidons, mean nor mighty,  
 Of living men whom they might master.”

8. **Judith**, as you see, was composed by a Christian familiar with the Sacred Scriptures. It seems strange that men familiar with early English literature should insist that the Bible was little known in England until about the time of Henry VIII. The best analysis and translation of *Judith* is that made by Professor Albert S. Cook.

9. **On the Death of Cædmon**, ALDHELM, afterwards Abbot of Malmesbury, took his place. He made and sang his own songs, which he delighted in chanting

to the common people ; they were Scriptural monitions put into a popular form and were well known in the good King Ælfred's reign.

10. **The Poems of Cynewulf** are the sweetest of all those written in Northumbria. The remnants of early English poetry are found in the "Exeter Book" and the "Vercelli Book," the names of which are taken from the places where their manuscripts are at present. Cynewulf is credited with some of the pieces contained in these books. They are generally religious. They were preserved in writing by the monks, who preferred them to secular songs treating of war and revenge. Death is represented as terrible ; but there is always a gleam of divine hope shining through the cloud. Among Cynewulf's works are : *Elene, or The Finding of the True Cross, St. Andreas, The Phœnix, The Passion of St. Juliana, Guthlac,* and many hymns in honor of our Lord.

11. **The Song of Brunanburh (937) and the Song of the Fight at Maldon (991?)** are two war-songs which have been preserved. The first was written for the *Saxon Chronicle*, which is a record of historical events from the reign of Ælfred to that of Stephen ; the story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard in it dates back as far as 775. About a century later King Ælfred began the editing of it, and, instead of a slight record of events, it became a history. *The Song of Brunanburh* was

inserted to describe a great battle between the Saxons under Æthelstan and the Scots and Northmen. It ends with a dark glimpse of the deserted battle-field:

“Silenced by swords and slain were the Danskers;  
Gone were the others, gone in the night-gloom;  
Shrill shrieked the screamers of death o’er the dying, —  
The raven, the eagle, the wolf of the wild wood,  
The vulture, — to feast on the white flesh of men.”

*The Fight at Maldon* is the story of how Byrhtnoth and his men bravely meet death, trusting in God, against the Danes. A victory of King Eadmund, 1016, and the coronation of King Eadgar, 973, are among the later poems in the *Chronicle*.

12. **The Venerable Bede** was born in the year of our Lord 673. Bæda, as his name is often written, was not only the father of English prose, but the scholar to whom England owes the beginning of scholarship. Bæda was a devout monk; he lived a tranquil life at Jarrow, given up entirely to the work of enlightening the world by letters. It is the fashion to elevate Wyclif and Tyndale and other paraphrasers of the Scriptures who came after Bæda to the highest place, for the reason that they revolted against the Church on whose authority the world received the Bible. But to Bæda’s reverent and scholarly mind is due the first prose translation of the Gospel of St. John into English. This was

his last work. He finished it on his death-bed. His forty-five other works were in Latin. All that Englishmen for many years knew of the sciences, they owed to him. Through this gentle monk, who was thoroughly permeated with love for the authority of the Catholic Church, England made her earliest step in learning. Just as the scribe had written the last words of his translation he began the *Gloria in Excelsis*, and died singing it.

Bæda established learning in the North. The monasteries had become the homes of scholars; libraries were established by ecclesiastics. Six hundred students, at least, had sat at Bæda's feet and prepared themselves to spread his teaching through the land. Alcuin, another great scholar, left his impress on the English mind. Bæda, like Cædmon, was born in Northumbria, which had been the home of learning. But the Danish invasions crushed out scholarship. The south of England was illiterate when Ælfred came to the throne. The thanes of Wessex thought only of warlike exercises and athletic sports. Ælfred, thanks to his mother, had been imbued with a love of letters.

13. **Saxon Literature** contained no books of science, for those of Bæda were in Latin. Ælfred regretted this. He sent to foreign countries for such men as Grimbold of St. Omer's, and Asser of St. David's. Under their tuition, he began to

study Latin literature. He opened schools wherever it was possible. Lingard says, "It was his will that the children of every freeman, whose circumstances would allow it, should acquire the elementary arts of reading and writing; and that those who were designed for civic or ecclesiastical employment should moreover be instructed in Latin." Ælfred translated for his subjects the ecclesiastical history of the English by Bæda and the abridgment of ancient history by Orosius, the *Consolation of Philosophy* by Boëthius, and, for the clergy, the *Pastoral Rule* of Gregory the Great.

14. **St. Dunstan and Aethelwold**, two good ecclesiastics, are the next great names in Saxon literature. The invading Danes destroyed the monasteries, and there was little effort to cultivate literature until the peaceful reign of Eadgar (958-75). The incursions of the Danes had caused ecclesiastical discipline to relax. Some priests had even married. St. Dunstan appealed to Rome to restore good order and to encourage scholarship. The Abbot Ælfric translated a great part of the Bible into simple English. He wrote his *Homilies*, the *Lives of the Saints*, and the first English-Latin dictionary. In the beginning of the eleventh century, the Archbishop Wulfstan's *Address to the English* appeared. It is as terrible a picture of the consequences of the Danish invasion as St. Anselm gives in his celebrated poem in Latin, which contains the lovely



hymn. *Omni die, dic Mariæ.* Saxon literature revived for a while under Edward the Confessor, to become mingled in the Norman torrent that rushed into it a few years later at the battle of Hastings.

## CHAPTER II (*continued*)

*The Gallo-Norman Romances.* — *Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Celtic Element.* — *Layamon's Brut*, 1205. — *The Ormulum*, 1215. — *Sir John Maundeville*, 1356. — *William Langland's Vision of Piers Plowman*, 1362. — *John Wyclif*, 1380. — *John Gower*, 1393.

15. **Religion**, one of the most important factors in the life of nations, has always inspired and influenced the expression of that life. We have seen that all the poets who wrote after the Saxons in England had become Christianized were stimulated by the great objects offered by Christianity to their contemplation. As England owes the first successful effort to blot out human slavery to a priest, Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester, so to priests and monks is due the revival of letters in England after the confusion of the change of rulers. The battle of Hastings, in which William the Conqueror defeated Harold, meant a great deal. The Saxons, the Danes, and the Normans were originally of the same blood. The Danes who overran England

mixed with the Saxons and did not change the speech.

16. **With William** came warriors of the Scandinavian race, — Northmen, — who, during a long residence in the part of France which their forefathers had conquered, had learned to speak the corrupt Latin known as the Gallo-Roman, because in Gaul it had degenerated from the sonorous Roman speech. This Gaulish Roman language is also known as Norman French, as these Normans spoke, and some of them wrote, it.

There is a famous dialogue, in Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, between Wamba the fool and Gurth the swineherd, in which is described the process by which the English speech was changed by the Norman invasion, — a process by which it became gradually more exact, more elegant, more comprehensive, more plastic, without losing any of that directness, strength, and simplicity so characteristic of its Teutonic character. When the Conqueror entered England an epoch began which was to help greatly towards making the English language and literature the magnificent things they are.

It is too common to think little of the influence of the Celts on English language and literature. But from the reign of Henry I., the third of the Norman kings, to the present time, the Celtic force has made itself felt in both the literature and the language of English-speaking peoples. This influence — of the

Welsh, the Irish, and the Scotch Celt — has been pointed out by a celebrated modern writer, Matthew Arnold.

17. **Geoffrey of Monmouth (1110–1154)**, was a Welsh priest at the Court of Henry I. He wrote a legendary history of Britain, in which King Arthur and his knights were given much to do, and the life of Brut, the first King of Wales and great-grandson of the pious Æneas. These Celtic stories were taken from the Latin of Geoffrey of Monmouth and put into the Gallo-Roman speech, the vernacular of the knights and ladies who then occupied the castles of England. They were sung and written by the minstrels in France, and brought back to England by the Norman poet, Wace, in the reign of Henry II. Tennyson's great epic, *The Idyls of the King*, is founded on some of the Celtic tales told by Geoffrey of Monmouth.

18. **The English Language**, little changed by the Conquest, continued to be the speech of the people, and Norman-French — from which the word Romance is derived — the language of the upper classes. The priests used Latin; the nobles and foreign soldiers, Norman-French. The art of story-telling was brought into fashion by Geoffrey of Monmouth's legends and the Norman minstrels. The two queens of Henry I., Matilda and Alice, encouraged the jingling rhymesters, who spun out the adventures of King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Alexander the Great

at endless length. The Anglo-Saxon poetry, rugged as it was, *was* poetry. From the Gallo-Roman poems still existing in MS., we can only wonder how the ladies and knights managed to listen and applaud. They were lavish both in applause and more substantial rewards.

19. **The English Chronicle**, written in the speech of the people, is the only piece of native English literature we find rippling through the turgidity of letters in England. It is made up of the Annals of Worcester, Winchester, Peterborough, and Abingdon, carried on at different periods in these places. They were finally merged into a connected whole and carried up to 1131 by a single person. This chronicle was begun at least a hundred years before the reign of King Ælfred (871), and continued until the accession of Henry II. The last event it records is the death of King Stephen. Let it be remarked that, until the reign of King John, the Normans and the English — or Saxons, as we may call them, from their origin — were distinct peoples living in one land. The Normans were the ruling race. They gave to the English speech its courtly terms, its names for the implements of battle, of the chase. But the Norman tongue was only the embroidery on a solid and beautiful texture. The Saxon was the hog, while the Norman was the stag, in the estimation of the nobles. English literature may be said to have slept until the reign of John, when,

in 1205, LAYAMON'S version of the *Brut*, which was first told by Geoffrey of Monmouth, appeared.

20. **Layamon** was a studious priest dwelling on the banks of the Severn. At this time both Saxons and Normans had begun to look on the early history of their common island with a certain pride. The Norman-French had gradually ceased to be the tongue of the entire upper classes. And when Layamon resolved to translate the *Brut* into English, he felt that he was about to do a noble work for his people. He used as the basis for his poem, the French version of Wace; but made it so entirely English that there were few French words in his text. He adopted the head-rhyme of the Saxon. In Layamon's energetic verses we see a great contrast to the meaningless jingles of the Gallo-Norman poets. If the Normans gave the English language symmetry, the Saxons gave it strength. Layamon's *Brut* is the first evidence of the complete mingling of the Norman and Saxon elements in English speech. It has the vigor of Cædmon and Cynewulf. The appearance of Layamon marks a new epoch.

21. **The Ormulum (1215)** is a prayer-book in verse, with a meditation, or little sermon, for every day in the week. Only a part of it remains. It was written by a priest named Orm. It was inspired by the motive which has made Thomas à Kempis' *Following of Christ* a classic. The *Ormulum* is in English. The other early religious books were many in number.

Among them were *The Rule of the Anchoresses* (1220), *The Genesis and Exodus* (1250), many hymns to the Blessed Virgin, and a volume of metrical *Lives of the Saints*, translated from Latin into French.

22. **The Franciscan and Dominican Friars** helped to make the Normans and Saxons one people by uniting them in the bonds of a common faith. The Normans and Saxons both acknowledged the authority of the Pope, however their national prejudices might clash. The friars influenced the speech of the people. St. Anselm and the great churchmen who immediately preceded and succeeded him wrote in Latin. The friars learned English for the purpose of communicating with the people, and they led well-intentioned men to make English books. In 1303 Robert Mannyng translated into English the *Manual of Sins*; in 1327 William of Shoreham translated the Psalms. About 1327, appeared the *Cursor Mundi*, a metrical version of the New Testament in English, with legends of the saints; in 1340 appeared the *Ayenbite of Inwyt*,—the early English equivalent for remorse of conscience,—and about the same time, Richard Rolle's *Prick of Conscience*.

23. **Annals.**—The *Chronicles* begin with William of Malmesbury (1126) and end with Matthew Paris (1273). These in some measure superseded the historical narrative continued in the old English Chronicle. They were written at court in Latin; the annals were written in monasteries.

24. **Romances.**—The Arthurian *Legends*, first written for the Normans in England by Geoffrey of Monmouth, were re-arranged by Walter Map, in the reign of Henry II. In his version *The Holy Grail* makes its appearance. Another romantic series of stories were those of *Charlemagne and His Twelve Knights*, *Alexander the Great*, *The Siege of Troy*. These romantic legends entered into the blood of English poetry. We meet with them very often later in many forms. *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, including *Guy of Warwick* and *Beves of Hamtoun*, and many other tales taken from the French, became popular. Towards the end of the fifteenth century the English story-tellers borrowed their plots rather from Italy than from France. Richard Cœur de Lion and Robin Hood were heroes of romantic legends.

25. **English Ballads** clustered around the name of the outlaw Robin Hood. Towards the end of the fourteenth century, lyrics and short English poems sprung up. The most important is *The Kitchen Lord* and Laurence Minot's (1333–1352) war ballads.

26. **The Vision of Piers Plowman.**—A bitter and despondent poem, in which we find an echo of the sadness of *Beowulf*, is William Langland's *Vision of Piers Plowman*. Langland was born in Shropshire, England, about 1330. He had reason for sadness; plague and tempest had swept over England, and almost decimated the inhabitants of the land. In the



person of Piers he inveighs against the oppression of the poor and the abuses which had, owing to England's distance from Rome and the haughtiness of the Norman nobles, entered the religious and social fabric. In the *Vision* the Church tells of Truth. Piers seeks for this Truth, which means in the first part justice among both priests and laymen. Truth afterwards becomes God the Father, and Piers our Lord Himself. It lashes mercilessly the abuses of the times, and shows how a love for material things and a neglect of charity toward the poor make the laborer despair of justice. It appeared in 1352. It was probably written at Oxford, where Langland was a secular priest. In 1377 and 1393 the poem, with additions, called *Do Wel*, *Do Bet*, and *Do Best* appeared. Another poem on *The Deposition of Richard II.* was written late in life. It is said that he died in the year of Chaucer's death, 1400.

27. **John Wyclif (1320–1384)** had the merit of writing in good English for his time. His name has been used as that of a pioneer of the movement to which Henry VIII. gave form — the rebellion against the authority of the Catholic Church. He has been unreasonably called “the morning-star of the Reformation.” Wyclif is first mentioned in history about the year 1367. He was about this time deprived of a wardenship he held at Oxford, on the charge that he had illegally gained it. A short time before he had made an attack on the mendicant fri-

ars, who had done so much towards the conversion of England. It was unchristian to ask for alms, he held, and when they appealed to the example of Our Lord, he returned that Our Lord had not asked for alms. He held, too, that the right to hold property is a grace of God, and that men forfeited it by sin. This doctrine had a great deal to do with the bloody rebellion of the peasants which followed. He changed the text of the Scriptures, and scattered it over the land by means of the "poor priests," his followers. He appealed from the decision of the Bishops to the private judgment of individuals, and urged them to interpret the Scriptures for themselves. Versions of the Scriptures had been made before Wyclif's, but they had not been so widely spread, nor were they written in such strong English, nor were they sent forth with the advice that unlearned men should interpret them. When he appealed in doctrinal matters from his Bishop to a lay tribunal, his supporters fell away from him. He finally retracted all the doctrines which were contrary to the teaching of the Church; he was permitted to retire to Lutterworth, where he continued to be rector. A stroke of apoplexy rendered him speechless, and he died on the last day of the year, 1384, while assisting at Mass. It may be noted that while Wyclif spared no words of abuse against the Bishops and the clergy, no attempt was made to persecute him. Considering the dangerous doctrines he publicly

taught, we may cite this as an evidence of moderation in the reign of Richard II.

28. **Sir John Maundeville**, who is sometimes looked upon as a fictitious personage, is said to have been born at Albans about the year 1300. Whether or not he ever lived, or his name was merely a *nom de plume*, we know that the narrative of his travels was borrowed largely from many books of the same kind then in existence, and that he had never seen most of the countries he pretends to have visited. The whole title of the book is *The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Maundeville, Knight*. It was written in French and became so popular that it was translated into several languages. The only manuscript copy we have is in French, the English versions being translations so much at fault that we know they could not have been the work of the author himself.

29. **John Gower (1325–1408)**, surnamed the “moral Gower” by his friend Chaucer, wrote the *Speculum Meditantis* (*The Mind of The Thoughtful Man*), in French; the *Vox Clamantis* (*The Voicce of One Crying*), in Latin; and *Confessio Amantis* (*The Lover's Confession*), in English. The last was written at the request of King Richard. Gower was under the influence of French literature. He was at his best in rebuking the follies of the king, who respected him. The *Speculum Meditantis* was discovered only a few years ago at Cambridge. His poems are very dull and long.

We are now in the Middle period of the English Language. It lasted from the time of Chaucer to the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign. During this time all things without life were put in the neuter gender, and some Teutonic practices, such as the termination of the infinitive with *en*, began to be dropped.

### CHAPTER III

*Geoffrey Chaucer (1340 to 1400)*. — *Lord Tennyson's lines on Chaucer*. — *French Period: Romaunt of the Rose (attributed to Chaucer)*. — *The Complaynte unto Pite (1372)*. — *The Book of the Duchesse (1369)*. — *Italian Period (1373 to 1384)*. — *Troilus and Criseyde*. — *The Complaynt of Mars*. — *Aenida and Arcite*. — *Boethius*. — *The Former Age*. — *The Parlement of Foules*. — *Chaucer's Wordes unto Adam*. — *The Hous of Fame*. — *English Period (1381 to 1389)*. — *The Legend of Good Women*. — *The Canterbury Tales*. — *Occleve's Governail of Princes (1411 or 1412)*. — *John Lydgate (about 1433)*. — *The Seoteh Poets*.

30. **Geoffrey Chaucer** is the first truly great poet who wrote in English, the poetic precursor of Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, Dryden, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Aubrey de Vere, Bryant, Longfellow, and Whittier. All later poets have praised him. Tennyson, in "The Dream of Fair Women," says melodiously:

"I read, before my eyelids dropt their shade,  
    ' *The Legend of Good Women,*' long ago  
Sung by the morning star of song, who made  
    His music heard below ;

“ Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath  
 Preluded those melodious bursts that fill  
 The spacious times of great Elizabeth  
 With sounds that echo still.”

“ Dan ” is a prefix of respect, resembling “ Dom,” and though we might object to Elizabeth’s being called “ good,” we can find no fault with the adjective “ great,” for she was more kingly than queenly.

31. **The City of London** was Geoffrey Chaucer’s birth-place. His father was probably a wine merchant ; he was born about 1340. Early in life he was made page to Prince Lionel, Duke of Clarence ; he fought in France with the English army ; he was taken prisoner, and ransomed. From 1381 to 1386, he was again connected with the court. His earliest poems were lost or only fragmentarily preserved. The earliest complete poem of his we still possess is the *A. B. C. of the Blessed Virgin*. Each stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet. “ G ” begins, (the spelling is modernized<sup>1</sup>), with these four lines :

“ Glorious maid and mother, thou that never  
 Wert bitter on the earth or on the sea,  
 But full of sweetness and of mercy ever,  
 Help that my Father be not wroth with me ! ”

This was translated from the French for the Duchess Blanche, the wife of John of Gaunt,

<sup>1</sup> In reading Chaucer the *e* before a consonant ought to be pronounced, — for instance : “ neither in erthè nor in see.”

Chaucer's powerful friend. His early poems show a strong French influence.

32. **Chaucer's Italian Period** followed his three diplomatic missions to Italy. It is supposed that there he met Petrarca, the sweet master of the sonnet, and Boccaccio, whose stories very much influenced the *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer quotes often from Dante, but he could not have met him, as Durante Alighieri (called Dante) died in 1321. The works of Chaucer, after his Italian journeys, were serious in motive.

33. **The Canterbury Tales**, a string of narrative poems on which Chaucer's fame rests, and which entitle him to be called, in Spenser's words, the "well of English undefiled," show that the poet had cast off the French and Italian influence and become English. It is true that he borrowed the plot of some of his stories from Boccaccio's frivolous tales of the Florentine nobles who revelled while the plague raged in their city. *The Canterbury Tales* are genuine pictures of English folk. They give us an impression of Chaucer's time, though, in reading them, one must remember that Chaucer was a poet, not an historian. He is humorous and grave by turns, respectful of sacred things, though sometimes coarse. Dying, he bitterly regretted certain lines which even his contrite tears could not blot out. He was sometimes free in his expressions concerning abuses that may have crept into religious disci-

pline. He was neither a schismatic nor a heretic. He was a devout Catholic, with none of the bitterness and pride which characterized his contemporary, Wyclif. His favorite flower was the daisy, and he loved the woods and fields as no poet before him had loved them; he made the love of natural scenery a quality in English poetry.

34. **Chaucer the Man** was always cheerful. His portrait shows him to have been grave, yet with a humorous look. He is painted with his inkhorn and rosary. In spite of occasional indelicacies, the writings of Chaucer show that he was a deeply religious man.

35. **Chaucer the Poet** was, above all, a teller of stories; although he translated *De Consolatione Philosophiæ* into English, he is not remembered by it or any of his other translations. Chaucer's fame rests on his power of observing and feeling. William Hazlitt<sup>1</sup> says of Chaucer that he had "an equal eye for truth of nature and discrimination of character; and his interest in what he saw gave new distinctness and force to his power of observation." In *The Canterbury Tales*, he paints his time as he saw it, with Charles Dickens' tendency to make each individual's character known by his external appearance. This is accountable for occasional exaggeration.

He shows us a party of pilgrims on their way to

<sup>1</sup> Lectures on the English Poets.



the shrine of St. Thomas, the martyred Archbishop of Canterbury. They stop "in Southwark, at the Tabard." Among them is a knight, a worthy man, —

"That fro the timè that he first bigan  
To ryden out, he lovèd chivalrye,  
Trowth and honour, fredom and curteisye."

His son, a young squire, —

"Curteys he was, lowly and servisable  
And çarf<sup>1</sup> biforn his fader at the table."

There, too, was a yeoman, who

"A sheef of pecock-arues<sup>2</sup> brighte and kene  
Under his belt he bar ful thriftily."

A nun, a Prioress, called Madame Eglantine, —

"At metè wel y-taught was she withalle,  
She leet no morsel from her lippès falle,  
Ne wette her fingres in her saucè deepe."

A priest who

"Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve  
He taughte, but first he folwed it himselve."

These personages and others, including the clerk of Oxford and the wife of Bath, each tell a story. Their stories are characteristic of the persons who recite them. The gentle and refined Prioress speaks of an heroic child who, dying for his Faith,

"O Alma Redemptoris Mater loudly sang."

<sup>1</sup> Carved.

<sup>2</sup> Arrows with peacock feathers.

The clerk of Oxford, — a well-read man, borrows from the Italian the tale of the patient Griselda, who suffers in loving silence persecution and abuse; and the good-natured wife of Bath tells a comic story. Dryden and Pope translated parts of *The Canterbury Tales* into more modern English. Chaucer began to make English the grand language it is; we owe him as great a debt as the Italians owe Dante. None of the poets before him wrote musical verse. He was a scholar, and yet much in the busy world; he knew men, and he believed that “the proper study of mankind is man.” He loved nature; the May-time, the daisy, green leaves, and birds make his poetry fresh with the joyousness of spring.

One of his later works was a prose treatise on the Astrolabe, made for “little Lewis, his son.” Parts of *The Canterbury Tales* were written in the last ten years of his life. The Parson’s tale was written in 1400, when he died in London. He was the first poet buried in Westminster Abbey.

36. **Thomas Occleve, or Hoccleve**, was born about 1370. His principal poem is *The Gouvernail of Princes*, for the most part a translation from the Latin of the Roman Ægidius, a pupil of St. Thomas Aquinas. The poem is in *rhyme royal*, which consists of seven heroic lines. Occleve, in this poem, addresses Chaucer, —

“O maister dere and fader reverent,  
My maister Chaucer, floure of eloquence.”

He is very reverent in spirit. The date of his death is unknown.

37. **John Lydgate**, born in Suffolk about 1370. His poems are *The Storie of Thebes*, a new Canterbury Tale, told by himself as he imagines himself joining Chaucer's pilgrims, the *Troy Books* (1420), the *Tales of Prinees* and *London Lickpenny*, a description of the pageants attending the entrance of Henry VI. into London. Lydgate was a monk of the Benedictine monastery at Bury St. Edmunds. *The Tales of the Prinees* is the most interesting and least crude of his poems. In early life, he cared little for his monastic duties. Later, he became very devout and wrote lives of St. Alban and St. Edmund.

38. **Neither Gower, Occleve, nor Lydgate** deserves special attention. The period between Chaucer and Spenser was dreary. The Scotch poets somewhat redeem it. They introduce a well defined Celtic element into English poetry. They are less sad than the English, and their humor is not "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

39. **John Barbour (1316-1395)**, was the first important Scotch poet. He studied both at Oxford and at Paris. He wrote *The Bruce*, in Chaucerian English. Before him was Huchoun, of whom so little is known that he is claimed both by England and Scotland.

40. **James I., of Scotland (1394-1437)**. He was

captured by the English in 1405, and kept prisoner at various places in England until 1424. In that year he married Lady Jane Beaufort, a granddaughter of that John of Gaunt who had been Chaucer's patron. She was the heroine of his principal poem, *The King's Quair* (The King's Book). *Christ's Kirk on the Green*, a humorous poem, is attributed to him. He reigned thirteen years in Scotland; he was assassinated in 1437.

41. **Robert Henryson**, Chaucer's best imitator, wrote some beautiful fables. Curtis gives his poems a high place, because of their refined language and his grace of form. In *The Three Dead Powis* (skulls), he anticipated Hamlet's famous speech on the skull of Yorick. His *Robyne and Makyne* is the earliest English pastoral. Little is known of his life; but it is certain that in 1462 he was at the University of Glasgow, that he was a schoolmaster at Dunfermline, and also a notary public there.

42. **William Dunbar** was the most original of the Scotch poets succeeding Chaucer. He was born about 1465. He entered as a novice the Franciscan Order, but became convinced that he had no vocation for that life. He received an annuity from James IV. of Scotland, and was the recognized poet of the court. His masterpiece is *The Dance of the Deadly Sins*. *The Golden Targe* and *The Thistle and the Rose* are allegories, rich in pictorial lan-

guage, but full of Latinisms. Dunbar had great power of vivid description; he paints a ship as "a blossom on a spray," and says that "the skies rang with the shouting of the larks." Dunbar was a devout Catholic, and he became occasionally satirical against abuses in discipline contrary to the teaching of the Church.

43. **Gawain Douglas** was a son of the Earl of Angus, born about 1475. At that time, when learning was despised by the turbulent Scotch, Gawain Douglas devoted himself to study and took his degree at the University of St. Andrew in 1494. His father, Earl Angus, is represented as saying, —

"Thanks to St. Bothan, son of mine,  
Save Gawain, ne'er could pen a line."

In 1501 he published his *Palace of Honour*; in 1513 he finished his translation of Virgil's *Æneid*. He was consecrated Bishop of Dunkeld in 1515. The date of *King Hart*, another poem, is uncertain. He died, exiled, in London, in 1522.

44. **The Celtic Influence** is shown in these Scotch poets. They have keen perception, deep melancholy, and a quick fancy. It must be remembered that though the derivation of the most useful and forcible words in the English language is Teutonic, the form of the language is not. It is to the Celtic element in the English language, the element we have in common with the Welsh, the Gaels, the Scotch,

and the Irish, that the English language owes much. If Chaucer had helped to *Saxonize* the form of the English language, as well as the words, we should have a language nearer to the German in manner. The difference may be shown by a quotation, suggested by Matthew Arnold. An English newspaper would say: "After the preparations for the banquet in honor of the delegates, the police closed the approach to Gürzenich." But the *Cologne Zeitung* might have put it: "After the preparations for-the-at-the-Gürzenich-Saale-in-honor-of-the-delegates-banquet-given completely made had been, took already-to-day-at-morning the-by-order-of-the-police-closing of the way to Gürzenich place."

You observe that there is a great difference between the modern English and the modern German form of expression. You would do well, too, to observe how many English words, like "house," "father," "mother," "daughter," "son," "hound," we have borrowed from the Teutonic of the Saxons.

45. **Minor English Poets.**—**Stephen Hawes** (about 1520) was a disciple of Lydgate. He was born in Suffolk, educated at Oxford, travelled in France, and was Groom of the Privy Chamber to Henry VII. His principal work is *The Pastime of Pleasure; or, The Historie of Graunde Amoure and La Belle Pucell*, written about 1506 and printed in 1517. It is an allegorical poem of chivalry. He imitated the Provençal school. His most famous couplet is:—

“ For though the day be never so long,  
At last the bell ringeth to evensong.”

Alexander Barclay (1476–1552) was known mainly as a translator and imitator. *The Ship of Fools* and his *Eclogues* are his most important works.

46. **John Skelton (1460–1529).** — Skelton was tutor to Henry VIII., laureate of three universities, and admired by scholars. Skelton became a priest, but did little credit to his sacred ministry. He was versatile and original. He wrote much doggerel and some Latin satire. His principal poems are *The Boke of Philip Sparowe* and *The Boke of Colin Clout*. He also wrote several plays.

47. **Sir David Lyndesay (1490–1555)** wrote *The Three Estates*, a play acted before James V. of Scotland and his court. The play lasted nine hours. In his poem called *The Dreame*, he describes a journey into the infernal regions, and also the past ages of the world. *The Testament of the King's Papyngo* is a satire, full of fury, as is, also, *The Tragedy of the Cardinal*, on the fall of Cardinal Beaton. Lyndesay was utterly intolerant; he was a disciple of John Knox, the Scotch iconoclast, who had many Scripture texts on his lips and but little Christian charity in his heart. His pages are disfigured by indecency, and though he wrote really poetic lines he was not a worthy disciple of Chaucer. The literary descendant of the Scotch poets

was Robert Burns, who inherited their peculiarly better qualities.

48. **Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey** may be called the morning stars of that glorious day which has lasted, with but few clouds, from the reign of Elizabeth to the present time. It is bitterly regretted that the English people blindly followed the tyrant Henry VIII. in his defiance of the successor of St. Peter. It has been said many times that the glories of English literature owe their later splendor to the Reformation. To show how false this is, we have only to remember that Wyatt and Surrey, the mild stars who preceded Spenser and Shakspeare, owe their inspiration, and the forms their inspiration took, to the Italians. Petrarca was the father of the Italian sonnet. Wyatt and Surrey introduced it into English literature. They also made fashionable that other form of the sonnet which Sir Philip Sidney and Shakspeare used to such advantage.

49. **The Petrarchan Sonnet** is stricter than the Shaksperian. It is not out of place here to explain a poetical form of which all English and American poets have been fond. The Petrarchan sonnet, and indeed all sonnets, should be an exercise in logic as well as an expression of a poetical thought. The first eight lines, called the octave, are the premise; the second six, called the sextette, are the conclusion. The sonnet should be written in pentameter



iambic. Study and imitation of it will be well repaid. Sometimes trochees are introduced. Four of the most beautiful sonnets in the English language are Milton's *On his Blindness*, Keats' *On Reading Chapman's Homer*, Wordsworth's *Scorn not the Sonnet*, and one of Aubrey de Vere's, beginning "God of our Youth." We give the rhyme-endings for a Petrarcan sonnet:—

. . . . . gold  
     . . . . . seen  
     . . . . . been  
 . . . . . hold :  
 . . . . . told  
     . . . . . demesne,  
     . . . . . serene  
 . . . . . bold :  
     . . . . . skies  
     . . . . . ken  
     . . . . . ways  
     . . . . . eyes  
     . . . . . men  
     . . . . . days.

Wordsworth's sonnet is not of the strict Italian form, but it will repay study :

"Scorn not the sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,  
     Mindless of its just honors. With this key  
     Shakespeare unlocked his heart ; the melody  
 Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;  
 A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;  
     With it Camöens soothed an exile's grief;

The sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf  
 Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned  
 His visionary brow: a glow-worm lamp,  
 It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faery-land  
 To struggle through dark ways; and, when a damp  
 Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand  
 The Thing became a trumpet, whence he blew  
 Soul-animating strains — alas, too few!”

The form used by Shakspeare and Sir Philip Sidney is similar to this. Liberty is allowed in the construction of the sextette. It frequently ends with a rhymed couplet.

50. **To Wyatt and Surrey** is due the introduction of lyrics into English poetry; and to Surrey, the introduction of blank verse. Wyatt was about fourteen years older than Surrey, and it is probable that the former's influence made the latter the first of our writers of lyrics. Wyatt's poems are imitations of verses in Spanish, French, and Italian. They consist of lyrics, sonnets, rondeaux, epigrams, and a version of the Penitential Psalms, after the manner of Dante and Alamanni. He was born at Allington Castle, in Kent, in 1503. He was the oldest son of Sir Thomas Wyatt, Bart. He was one of the ornaments of the Court of Henry VIII. He was a statesman and a diplomatist; he died on October 11, 1542. His poems were first printed in 1557.

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, was born about the year 1517. He became Earl of Surrey when his father succeeded to the dukedom of Norfolk, in

1524. Little is known of Surrey's life. He, like the majority of courtiers, whatever their convictions were, outwardly adopted the new opinions enforced by Henry VIII. He, too, was one of the victims of that unhappy tyrant; he was beheaded on January 19 or 20, 1547. The real reason of his execution is a mystery. His poems are original, musical, clear, and exquisitely wrought. His sonnets are better than Wyatt's, because he does not allow their difficult form to interfere with the thought. Mr. Churton Collins says: "In Surrey we find the first germs of the Bucolic Eclogue. In Wyatt we have our first classical satirist. Of lyrical poetry they were the founders." Surrey's poems appeared with Wyatt's in *Tottel's Miscellany*.

George Gascoigne, who preceded Spenser and was "popular during Shakspeare's boyhood and Spenser's youth," was the author of some of the earliest English dramas. The comedy *The Supposes* and the tragedy *Jocasta*, are both his. He wrote blank verse, somewhat inferior to his lyrics. He was born about 1536; he died in 1577.

Thomas Sackville, born in 1536, at Buckhurst, in Sussex, was a predecessor of Spenser. He wrote in seven-line stanzas. He planned the *Mirror for Magistrates*, for which he wrote an *Induction*, a preface, and the Story of Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, which contains his imitation of Dante, stately and solemn. With Thomas Norton, he wrote

the first English tragedy that has come down to us, *Gorbodue; or, Ferrex and Parrex*, acted in 1561. He was made Lord Buckhurst and Lord High Treasurer by Queen Elizabeth, and Earl of Dorset in 1604. He died in 1608. He is remarkable for having influenced the poetry of Spenser.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Early English Prose*

51. **The Travels of Sir John Maundeville** is said to be the first example of formal English prose. Chaucer himself wrote at least one of his tales in prose, and Higden's *Polychronicon* was translated in that form in 1387. In the fifteenth century Fortescue, Caxton, Pecoock, and Malory arose. To William Caxton, the great English printer, belongs the honor of having helped to 'preserve the works of Chaucer; he also printed Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, a book which, through the medium of Lord Tennyson's *Idyls* has largely influenced modern poetry. Reginald Pecoock wrote in vigorous English against the sect of Lollards. His pamphlet against the *Overmuch Blaming of the Clergy* was written in 1449, when he was Bishop of Chichester. He was one of the first religious controversialists who wrote in English. Sir John Fortescue's *Difference between Absolute and Limited Monarchy* is a fair example of English prose of the fifteenth century.

Sir Thomas Elyot, a contemporary and friend of More's, is an important writer of treatises.

William Caxton himself wrote prose. He translated the first book ever printed in the English language. It was called *The recuyell* (compilation) *of the History of Troy*. He translated it from the French and published it at Cologne in 1471.. Caxton was born in Kent, England, in 1426. He was sent to Holland and Flanders as the agent for the Merchants' Company. While there he heard of the newly invented art of printing. He had always been noted for his patience and energy. These were required to learn the new art in its primitive stage. In 1476 he returned to England, and in 1477 he issued the first book printed in England, which contains this inscription: "*Here endeth the book named the dictes or sayengis of the philosophres emprynted by me William Caxton at Westminster the yere of our Lord MCCCC LXXVIJ.*" A full list of Caxton's works may be found in Timperly's *History of Printing*. He died in 1491. The revival of classic literature helped to develop a taste for reading. *The Paston Letters*, a collection of the correspondence of an English country family (1422-1505), show that the English gentlemen of that time were much better read than similar personages in the eighteenth century, and that they took more pleasure in reading good books.

The Influence of the Italian Renaissance (the revival of classic studies in Italy, about 1453) made itself felt in England. Such students as Lord Tiptoft, the Earl of Worcester; Duke Humphrey of

Gloucester; Robert Flemmyng, Dean of Lincoln; John Gunthorpe, Dean of Wells; William Grey, Bishop of Ely; John Phraes, Provost of Balliol; and William Sellynge, Fellow of All Saints College, were stimulated by residence in Italy. From Chaucer down, we find that English literature owes much to the Italians.

52. **Sir Thomas More**<sup>1</sup> (1478–1535) was the greatest prose writer and the greatest and best man of his time. Thomson, the author of “The Seasons,” wrote of him:—

“Like Cato firm, like Aristides just,  
Like rigid Cincinnatus nobly poor—  
A dauntless soul erect, who smiled on death.”

Thomas More — knighted and made *Sir* Thomas More by Henry VIII. — was born in London, in 1478. He showed early signs of talent and limitless industry, which, together, are said to make genius. He was humorous yet grave, genial but just; he had a wit that stimulated rather than bit, and no power on earth could move him when his decision was founded on a principle. As he grew older, all the best qualities of his nature strengthened. In the household of the Archbishop of Canterbury he received a sound religious education. He entered Oxford at the age of fourteen; he entered Parliament at twenty-six. He gained the confidence of all classes; he was sent

<sup>1</sup> See *Life and Writings of Sir Thomas More*, by T. E. Bridgett.

on a mission to the Low Countries in 1515. In 1529, on the disgrace of Cardinal Wolsey, he was made Lord Chancellor by the King. If Henry VIII. expected that Sir Thomas More would be an instrument of his atrocious tyranny, he was disappointed. The King, who earlier had been a great patron of letters, admired and respected More; he knew, too, that More's reputation would perhaps silence many critics who were horrified by his intention to cast aside his wife, the good Queen Katharine of Aragon. But More was, above all, a Christian. Henry might have learned a lesson from the experience of his predecessor, Henry II., who had promoted Thomas à Becket to the highest office in the realm, and then learned that a true Christian cannot be bribed.

St. Thomas à Becket had defended the rights of the Church and the people, and Sir Thomas More followed his example. He would not take the oath of Supremacy which the King made obligatory. This oath made the King the spiritual superior of the Church in England. It was as unreasonable and tyrannical as if the Governor of New York were to force each citizen to swear that he was infallible in matters of faith and morals. Sir Thomas suffered, as St. Thomas à Becket had suffered before him. He was beheaded, with the learned and gentle Bishop Fisher. He went to his death smiling; hence Thomson's beautiful lines. Recently he and Bishop Fisher, with some other English martyrs,



were beatified by the Church, and we may now call the author of *Utopia* "Blessed."

53. The "Utopia" of Sir Thomas More is his most important work, but not an example of his prose. It was written in Latin, and, later, translated. It is the description of an ideal kingdom,—a work of imagination, with a solid lesson. More wrote, in 1513, the first history in the English language. It was printed in 1557. It was entitled a *History of Edward V. and his brother, and of Richard III.* No writer has ever lessened the authenticity of this history. It is the most trustworthy account of the horrible dealings of the infamous Richard III. with the little princes. Sir Thomas More—we may now call him the Blessed Thomas More—was remarkable for his prudence, gentleness, truthfulness. He had every quality which should characterize a saint, a hero, and a man of genius. Erasmus, a famous scholar of his time, crossed from the Continent to see him. They met at dinner, not knowing each other. Erasmus, who was an adept in lively talk, which did not always spare sacred things, attacked the doctrine of transubstantiation. Sir Thomas took up his gay sallies and keen arguments in his own way. Erasmus was astonished. More's logic and wit were invincible.<sup>1</sup> "*Aut tu Morus es, aut nullus!*" (You are either More or no one!); and More replied with equal quickness, "*Aut es Erasmus, aut*

<sup>1</sup> This anecdote is not authenticated by Father Bridgett.

*Diabolus!*” (You are either Erasmus or the Devil!) More was twice married. His first wife was the daughter of Mr. John Colt; she died, leaving him three daughters and a son. He then married Mistress Alice Middleton, a talkative and ignorant woman, who gave him but little comfort; but Sir Thomas was of such a pious and genial nature that no arrogance could spoil his good temper. He was martyred at the age of fifty-six years and five months.

54. **William Tindale**, born in 1484 — died in 1536, was a forcible writer of English prose. We have seen that the earliest book in English was the paraphrase made by Cædmon, under the patronage of the Abbess Hilda. Tindale is much praised for having “opened the Bible to the English people” by translating the New Testament from the Greek and Hebrew. Wyclif, whose peculiar theories had helped to deluge England with blood, had paraphrased Bible texts from the Latin of the Vulgate. Henry VIII. looked on the distribution of Tindale’s New Testament among the common people — many of whom could not read, and who must depend for its interpretation on others almost as ignorant as themselves — as an offence against his government. He forced Tindale to flee from the country, and prosecuted all who brought the translation into England. Finally, he grasped Tindale himself. Heresy with Henry VIII. meant any offence that might weaken

the people's regard for his government; heresy was therefore treason. In 1536 Tindale was burned at the stake for heresy. Wyclif's and Tindale's versions of the Scripture, though good examples of the English of their times, were even more doctrinally corrupt than the later King James' version. The Church has always treated the sacred Scriptures with the utmost reverence; she has forbidden the reading of corrupt versions, or versions not interpreted by herself; and the Douay version of the Bible is for sale everywhere, and is found in every Catholic household. Tindale wrote good English; but he taught the doctrine that every man might interpret the Bible for himself.

55. **Roger Ascham**, who was born in 1515 and died in 1568, was tutor in Latin and Greek to Queen Elizabeth. He was the author of the *Toxophilus* (from *Toxon*, a bow, and *philos*, a friend), a defence of archery, and *The School-Master*. He wrote good English, though he considered it necessary to apologize for writing in the vulgar tongue. "He," Ascham says, in this apology, "that will write well in any tongue, must follow this counsel of Aristotle, to speak as the common people do, to think as wise men do: as so should every man understand him, and the judgment of wise men allow him."

56. **Sir Philip Sidney**, born in 1554, entered Oxford at the age of thirteen or eighteen. He left

after remaining in the university five years, and began to travel on the Continent. On the night of August 24, 1572, when the French king and his evil-minded mother, Catherine de Medicis, put in motion the plot to massacre the Huguenots — whose leaders used religion for political purposes — Sir Philip was in Paris, and he took refuge from the murderers in the house of the English ambassador. Sir Philip was one of the few nobles of the time that seem to have been sincere Protestants, and his prejudices in favor of Henry VIII.'s new church were probably influenced by the hypocritical manner in which some of the Catholic French and Italian nobles made religion a cloak for crime.

57. **Sir Philip Sidney's great reputation** rests on his two prose works, *Arcadia* and the *Defence of Poetry*. While his verses are often artificial and conceited, his prose is extremely poetical. Cowper, the poet, calls him a "warbler of poetic prose." Sir Philip Sidney was much influenced by the Italian amorous poets, whose artificial conceits are even more artificial in English than they seem to be in Italian. Sir Philip who came to be looked on as the French looked on the Chevalier Bayard or as the English now consider General Gordon, died at Zutphen in 1586. He was fighting for the Netherlands against Spain. His dying act was to give a drink of water, which had been brought for him, to a dying soldier, saying, "Thy necessity is

greater than mine." Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie* is better English prose than his somewhat fantastic *Arcadia*.

58. Lyly's "Euphues" (1579) marks the beginning of the later literary period of Elizabeth's reign. Lyly's work was in prose, though he also wrote poetry and plays. It is full of extravagances and absurd conceits. It became the fashion because it reflected the tone and manners of Elizabeth's court. A new word "Euphuism," expressive of all that is strained and artificial, was created by it. Sir Thomas More and Sir Philip Sidney added "Utopian" and "Arcadian" to the language, and at this time, owing to an industry of writers, the English vocabulary was constantly increasing.

## CHAPTER V

### *Spenser*

59. **The Greatest of the English Poets after Chaucer** was Edmund Spenser, born in 1552; but what is called Elizabethan literature began with Wyatt and Surrey. To them we owe that perfection of form which English poetry and English prose have attained; for prose composition is affected largely by the refinement and elegance of poets. Chaucer, as we have seen, borrowed his stories from the Italians, Dante and Boccaccio; Wyatt and Surrey now borrowed Italian poetical forms, or rather imitated them.

60. **The Early Elizabethan Period** dates from 1559 to 1579. From 1580 to 1603 was that later Elizabethan period so radiant in the annals of literature. This sudden burst of light came upon the English world like a sunburst after the darkness of early dawn; but Wyatt and Surrey, the writers of travels, the translators of Virgil and Ovid, and the many writers of detached verses, who went into print because of the example of Sir Philip Sidney, — above all, the makers of ballads, stimulated the beginning of a great literary movement.

61. **The First Collection of Poems** was the *Paradise of Dainty Devices*, published in 1576. This and *Tottel's Miscellany* were the progenitors of the vast crowd of annuals, magazines, and poetical "collections" which followed, increasing in number down to our own time. The taste for stories also grew. William Painter made a translation of many Italian tales, which he called *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566), and George Turberville's *Tragical Tales*, with new versions of *Amadis of Gaul*, the Athenian legends, and the Grecian myths, might be found everywhere. Plays of all kinds were produced; masques, which were lyrical plays, full of spectacular effects, became the fashion.<sup>1</sup> The public mind was quickened by the mass of imaginative material it suddenly beheld. Men who wrote strove to write as elegantly as Wyatt and Surrey and Sir Philip Sidney, who themselves had tried to equal Petrarca and Ariosto. Sackville's poems in the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1559) and Gascoigne's *Steel Glass*, a satirical poem (1576) belong to this period.

62. **With Spenser** a new force came into English literature. Born, as we have seen, about the middle of that remarkable century which ended some years after the death of Elizabeth, Edmund Spenser was educated at one of the grammar-schools founded and endowed by the Merchant Tailors' Company, from whence he went up to Cambridge in 1569, and

<sup>1</sup> See description of one in Sir Walter Scott's novel, *Kenilworth*.

acquired the degree of M.A. some seven years later. Little is known of his university career, except two friendships which he formed there, one at least of which had a potent influence on his mind. Edmund Kirke, who was like Spenser a sizar of Pembroke Hall, has recently been identified as the "E. K." who edited and concentrated our poet's earliest work, the anonymous *Shepherd's Calendar*; but unfortunately little else is known about him. The other friend, Gabriel Harvey, was Spenser's elder by many years. He was a fellow of Pembroke, and afterwards a student and teacher of civil law at Trinity Hall. Harvey, "the happy above happiest men," had in his day a high reputation as a classical scholar, was well read in Italian literature, was, moreover, a sound critic, and doubtless had some share in the formation of Spenser's ideas. Spenser did not return immediately to London after quitting Cambridge. A mist hangs round his sojourn in Lancashire; but it has an interest from the fact that he seems to have gained an experience which stimulated his nascent genius and gave color to his thoughts.

In 1579 we find him in London, the friend of Philip Sidney, busy with the "new" *Shepherd's Calendar* and the first conceptions of his great masterpiece, the *Faerie Queene*. In the winter of 1579 the *Shepherd's Calendar* was published anonymously. The time was ripe for a new poet. Since



Chaucer had been laid in his grave, almost two centuries before, the realization of his splendid promise had been, if not altogether checked, retarded. The civil strife known as the wars of the Roses, and the religious troubles which accompanied the so-called Reformation, were antagonistic to the development of the literary spirit. But in 1580 a reign of comparative peace had succeeded these dissensions, and the nation looked from the midst of its growing prosperity for some worthy successor of him whom Michael Drayton called —

“ The first of those that ever brake  
Into the Muse’s treasure, and first spake  
In weighty numbers.”

Under such circumstances appeared the *Shepherd’s Calendar*. The poem consists of twelve eclogues, having no internal link with each other except that each is assigned to a different month of the year. The subjects are various: the course of true love; satires on the indolence of the clergy; one in praise of the Queen, “ fair Eliza; ” two of them fables of “ The Oak and the Briar ” and “ The Fox and the Kid. ” Dryden goes so far as to say that the *Shepherd’s Calendar* is not matched in any language, and ranks the author with Theocritus and Virgil; but we need not go quite so far as this and yet acknowledge the poetical power and beauty of the poem, and the new spirit which Spenser has breathed into the English of Chaucer which he borrowed.

In this same year, 1580, Spenser went to Ireland as secretary to Lord Grey, who had been sent by Elizabeth as Lord-Deputy to that country, and in his company no doubt witnessed those sad scenes of Irish life, an exaggerated account of which he has embodied in his *View of the Present State of Ireland*. In 1586 the poet was appointed clerk of the Council of Munster, and granted the manor and castle of Kilcolman, and it was in the midst of the beautiful scenery which abounds in the neighborhood of that residence that he composed the first three books of his masterpiece, the *Faerie Queene*.

63. **The Faerie Queene.**—The germ of this great work was, as we have intimated, sown early in Spenser's literary career; but it grew in secret, until it blossomed on the banks of the Mulla which flowed through the Kilcolman demesne. One likes to fancy the scene as the gentle Spenser poured the story of his allegory into the enraptured ears of Raleigh under the shadow of the castle. Out of respect for the Puritanical ideas prevalent at the time, Spenser thought it necessary to shape his thoughts into a work on moral philosophy. The poem had an avowedly didactic aim. In a prefatory letter addressed to Raleigh he unravels the moral he had "cloudily enwrapped in allegorical devises." But, in truth, the work has no well-defined plan. It is a network of allegories, always beautiful indeed, but loosely connected, and confused still more by endless

digressions whithersoever the poet's fancy led him. The leading idea of the struggle of Good and Evil — of the trials which beset man's life in all conditions and at all times — runs, like a golden vein, throughout the poem, at one time hidden by a profusion of rich imagery, anon losing itself in the mazes of charming fancy, but never completely obscured. The twelve books were intended to portray the warfare of the twelve knights (Aristotle's twelve virtues) with the powers of Evil. The machinery was borrowed (as the poet admits in the prefatory letter) from the popular Celtic legends about King Arthur, and his ideas of moral philosophy from the Aristotelian categories current among the schoolmen. In Arthur, before he was king, is portrayed the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private moral virtues, who is ultimately to aspire to the hand of the faerie queene, the one and only bride of man's spirit, endowed with humility and innocence. Only six books, however — the legends of Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, of Friendship, Justice, and Courtesy — were finished, and thus only a portion of the great allegory remains. Parallel with this spiritual allegory Spenser introduces an historical one, in which Elizabeth is Gloriana, and Mary Queen of Scots is Duessa, and Leicester, and occasionally Sidney, is Prince Arthur, and Raleigh is Timias.

As an allegory the poem has many faults. It does not bear its story on the surface; it is involved

and intertisted in parts so that the mind is confused with too much ornament, and is content to lose itself in the splendor of the imagery; it is not consecutive or well-ordered. But if it is art run riot, what splendid art it is! What fancy, what music, what a sense of beauty! With truth indeed is Spenser called the poet's poet, for since his time the *Faerie Queene* has nourished at its source the singers of the centuries that have come and gone.

Raleigh was delighted with the new poem, and took Spenser to England, where he received the adulation of the court. In the following year (1591) he collected and published his minor poems, including *The Ruins of Time*, the *Tears of the Muses*, and *Mother Hubberd's Tale*, a satire on the Church and society. The poet returned to Ireland in the same year, wrote his *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, an account of the court of Elizabeth, and married a lady whose Christian name, Elizabeth, alone survives. To her he addressed his *Sonnets*, full of quaint fancy and sweetness, and the incomparable wedding ode, the *Epithalamium*, the finest composition of its kind in the language. The year after his marriage he went over to London with three more books of the *Faerie Queene*, having thus completed half of his cherished plans.

His death was in contrast to his life. During the Munster insurrection of 1598, his castle at Kilcolman was sacked and burned, and, according to some

untruthful accounts, a child of his perished in the flames. Spenser and his wife escaped to London; but he was broken-hearted, and died January 16, 1599. He rests in Westminster Abbey, near the grave of Chaucer.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Prose* — 1561--1731

64. **Lord Bacon (1561–1626)** is called the father of the Inductive Method of Philosophy. But he did not deserve this title, as Aristotle's method is both deductive and inductive. He gave English philosophy a turn towards that method which draws its conclusions from experience. Like his ancestors, the Saxons, he had no talent for abstract reasoning. Francis Bacon, Viscount Verulam, wrote admirable English prose in his two books on *The Advancement of Learning* (1605). Bacon did not believe in the permanency of the English language, so he expanded it into nine Latin books in 1623. He finished it and the *Novum Organum* in 1620. These and the *Historia Naturalis et Experimentalis*, published in 1622, formed what he called the *Instauratio Magna*. The last edition of his essays, which, for their compressed, masterly style, rank among the most important examples of English prose, appeared in 1625. Bacon also wrote a *History of Henry VIII*.

65. **Sir Walter Raleigh** sketched the *History of the World* while in prison; the poet Daniel wrote a

*History of England to the time of Edward III.* Daniel, in his literary style, was the precursor of picturesque historians, like Macaulay and Froude. Holinshed and Harrison's *Description and History of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577) suggested to Shakspeare the plots of many of his plays.

Richard Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* (1594–7), a theological work, is of some literary merit for its style.

John Selden wrote the *History of Titles and Titles of Honor*. The writer of plays, Thomas May, wrote a *History of the Parliament of 1640*. Thomas Fuller's *Church History of Britain* appeared in 1656.

66. **Travel and Miscellaneous Works:**— Henry Wotton's *Letters from Italy*, and Samuel Purchas' enlargement of Hakluyt's *Voyages* (1613). The fashion of writing descriptions of personal characters, borrowed from the Greek, was begun by Sir Thomas Overbury (1614), and carried on by Earle and Hall. Philemon Holland (1552--1637) is the most important of the band of writers who devoted themselves to the work of translating books of ancient classical authors. Thomas Fuller's *Holy and Profane State* (1642), and his *Worthies*, created an appetite for biographies. Fuller's *Worthies*, like *Plutarch's Lives*, is deservedly a classic. Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), and Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1642) might be

called glimpses of all sorts of subjects. In James I.'s reign, Sir Thomas Bodley established his famous Bodleian Library at Oxford. Sir Robert Cotton's library was likewise founded. We need not trouble ourselves with the names of a host of sectarian controversialists. Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler*, a serene and gentle book, lives to this day, though Izaak fished over two hundred years ago (1653). Among the theological works, whose style had all the Elizabethan poetry, with new and added qualities, may be named Jeremy Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying*, 1647. Hobbes' *Leviathan*, a philosophical work, rich in style, appeared in 1651. Hobbes, like all English philosophers, except Newman, is more remarkable for the clearness of his language than the subtlety of his reasoning. The style of the later men was less poetic, but stronger than that of the Elizabethans.

67. **Queen Anne**, who ascended the English throne in 1702, was not an intellectual woman or even a clever one, but nevertheless a splendid epoch in English letters borrowed her name. The period succeeding her coming to the throne has been called the Augustan Age of English Literature, because the writers of that period are said to have done for the English tongue what Virgil and Horace did for the Latin language under Augustus. The truth is that the writers of the Queen Anne period were great because of their ancestors. Joseph Addison and Sir



Richard Steele were literary descendants of Cowley and Sir William Temple; and these writers imitated the great French author Montaigne — a volume of whose essays is the only book now existing known to have been owned by Shakspeare.

68. **Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele** invented periodical literature; they were in England the fathers of the magazine. Sir Richard Steele, born in Dublin, in 1672, of English parents, was educated at Merton College, Oxford. His friends refused to buy him a commission in the army, and he enlisted as a common soldier. He was promoted to the rank of captain. He seems to have been a kind-hearted, somewhat reckless, brilliant man. He was certainly a more interesting character than Addison, whom Macaulay exalts at his expense. Steele was humorous and pathetic, and he had studied human nature with sympathy. In the *Tatler* (1709), we enjoy the reflection of these qualities. He touches the foibles and fashions, the vices and virtues of his time, without bitterness. Addison joined him in *The Tatler* and, later (1711), in *The Spectator*. Together, they introduced a new form into literature, and if the drama was the expression of literature in Shakspeare's time, as the novel is now, the short, semi-humorous half-satirical essay was the expression of Pope's time. After a time these charming essays were printed daily, and *The Spectator*, *The Guardian*, and *The Freeholder*, were largely looked for by all

people of taste. Addison refined English prose style and supplied the elegance of diction that Steele wanted. Addison, judged by our modern ideas, lacked many of the literary qualities for which his contemporaries most esteemed him. Grammatical errors can be pointed out in nearly all his essays, and Blair's analysis of his style (see *Blair's Rhetoric*) is not only useful to students, but destructive to the claim of Addison's admirers, that he was the most polished writer of all time. In 1701, Steele published *The Christian Hero*, in which he shows that he repented his reckless habits. Steele wrote plays, and political and anti-popery tracts. His periodical papers and those he wrote with Addison made his reputation and Addison owed as much to Steele as Steele owed to him. Steele held important government appointments, for, as Macaulay says, at no time was literature so splendidly appreciated by the State as during the reigns of William and of Anne.

69. **Joseph Addison** was a correct writer as to cadence and elegance; he was a fine writer without bombast; he was a constant student of the art of expression, not of human nature. He was not so good-humored as Steele, and his allusions to women are more satirical and less kindly. He was born at Litchfield and educated at Charterhouse. His poem on the victory of Blenheim made his reputation (1704), and he was appointed Under-Secretary of

State. He married the dowager Countess of Warwick; he died in 1719, leaving a daughter. *The Tatler* was begun by Steele under the pen-name of Isaac Bickerstaff, and it appeared three times a week. Addison's first contribution appeared in No. 20, May 26. On the demise of *The Tatler*, Steele began *The Spectator*, which lasted from March 1, 1711, to December 6, 1712; it was issued daily. Addison wrote about half a number. It was succeeded by *The Guardian*; after this *The Spectator* was resumed. *The Freeholder* was a bi-weekly written by Addison himself. Daniel Defoe conducted *The Review*, a periodical which differed from Steele's and Addison's, by touching politics. Defoe, Steele, and Addison deserve the credit of having called the attention of their contemporaries to "Paradise Lost." Addison lives because of his essays; his tragedy, *Cato*, has no life in it; parts of *Blenheim* are still quoted; but his creation, Sir Roger de Coverley, will not die as long as good literature is appreciated. Addison died in 1719.

70. **Daniel Defoe**, it is said, wrote 250 works — religious treatises, commercial pamphlets, histories, and his great work, *Robinson Crusoe*. He was born in London, in 1661; he was educated for the dissenting<sup>1</sup> ministry. Defoe has been called the first professional author, as he lived entirely by the sale

<sup>1</sup> Dissenters in England are Protestants who do not belong to the Anglican Church.

of his books. He published his first novel in 1719. It was *Robinson Crusoe* — one of the most remarkable books in our language. Defoe's English is old-fashioned and not of the best old-fashion; but in his wonderful faithfulness to the details of human life and in his knowledge of human nature he stood almost alone. His political periodical, *The Review* (1704–1712), was the prototype of our weekly newspapers. His other novels were *Captain Singleton* (1720), *Duncan Campbell* (1720), *Moll Flanders* (1721), *Colonel Jack* (1721), *Journal of The Plague* (1723), *Roxana* (1724), and the undated *Memoir of a Cavalier*. He died in 1731; he was a traveller, a politician, and a tireless writer. Professor Minto truly says of Defoe: "He is more openly derisive and less bitter than Addison, having no mastery of the polite sneer; he is not a loving humorist, like Steele, but sarcastically and derisively humorous; and he is more magnanimous and less personal than Swift."

71. **Bishop Berkeley's Minute Philosopher**, in which he questioned the existence of matter, Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, and Bishop Butler's *Analogy*, still greatly read, are the principal metaphysical works of the Queen Anne period.

72. **To Dryden's** admirable prose essays, we owe the first real criticism in English. *Izaak Walton*, *Cowley*, and *Hobbes*, added to the treasury of prose. Later came *Sir William Temple's* essays. Sir Wil-

liam was, according to Dr. Johnson, the first writer to make English prose musical. He was born in 1628 and he died in 1699. He was a diplomatist, and was credited with arranging the marriage of William of Orange and the Princess Mary of England. His manner of writing prose was directly opposite to that of Dryden, who was brilliant in his essay, but careless, entirely disregarding the paragraph. The prose writers of the beginning of the reign of Queen Anne were party hacks or Bohemian toilers who degraded literature by using it as an instrument for flattering their patrons. At that time (1702), the patron held writers in his grasp. Mæcenas was the rich friend of Horace, the most noble of Latin poets; but these English writers were the slaves of the patron. Dr. Johnson was the first to discard this vile servility, and to appeal to the public. The patron or patrons paid the writer, and, as a rule, the writer repaid them in flattery. The lighter prose up to 1702 had no representative except Lady Rachel Russell's *Letters*, Pepys' *Diary* (1660--69), and Evelyn's *Diary* (1640). History was a collection of odds and ends, coarsely flavored with bigotry, such as Clarendon's *History of the Civil Wars* (1641), and Bishop Burnet's narrow-minded *History of His Own Times* and *History of The Reformation*.

73. **One of the Best** examples of sound English prose is the *Pilgrim's Progress* of John Bunyan.

It was written for the common people of England; as a study of the Saxon element of the English language it is unexcelled. John Bunyan wrote some religious poems and *The Holy City*, in 1665. In 1678, four years after the death of Milton, he wrote the *Pilgrim's Progress*. John Bunyan was a bigoted and ignorant man, but he produced a book which is almost a prose epic. As a good example of his style, the fight between Christian and Apollyon is to be recommended. Bunyan was the last prose author who reflected the spirit of the Commonwealth, though he is generally classed among the Elizabethans.

## CHAPTER VII

*Spenser to Shakspeare, 1553–1593.— The Beginning of the Drama.— Marlowe*

74. **Edmund Spenser's Shepherd's Calendar** is the beginning of the later Elizabethan period of poetry; it appeared, without the poet's name, in 1579. Before Spenser and Sidney appeared in poetry — Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* sonnets came out in 1591—Englishmen thought it somewhat undignified to publish poetry. Of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, it may be truly said that it is the poem best beloved of the poets. It is a series of the richest pictures.

After 1580, came youthful and ardent poets, patriotic poets who brought the historical play into fashion, and the religious poet. The greatest of the class during Queen Elizabeth's reign was the Jesuit, Robert Southwell. Southwell's poems were very popular. They, strange to say, were as much read in England as the very sensuous verses so fashionable at the time. This shows that, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, there were still many devout Catholics in the land, and also that the

throwing off of the yoke of the Catholic Church in England was not due to a religious sentiment, but to the revolt of human nature against restraint; it was not that the Church was full of abuses, but that men wanted to be free from her rigid discipline.

75. **Robert Southwell, S. J.**,<sup>1</sup> was the third son of Richard Southwell, a Catholic gentleman of Norfolk. Robert was born at his father's seat, Horsham, St. Faith's, about the year 1560. There is a tradition to the effect that a gypsy woman made an attempt to steal him, in the hope of gain; and he never ceased, it is said, to show his gratitude to God for having saved him from a semi-savage and vagrant life. Although the Southwell family was Catholic, Richard Southwell never permitted his religion to stand in the way of his preferment; and in those days Catholics could obtain worldly advantage only by the sacrifice of principle. Robert's tendency towards the religious life was so strong that he was sent to Douay to be educated for the priesthood, and from there to Paris. This fact speaks well for his father, who risked much by having him educated abroad. Robert went from Paris to Rome, where he was received into the Society of Jesus. Early in the year 1585 he applied for permission to return to England. The thought of souls perishing for the sacred nourishment that he could give them filled him with a solic-

<sup>1</sup> For further account of a group of Catholic poets, see Dr. Egan's "Lectures on English Literature." (W. H. Sadlier & Co.)



itude that was agony, and he longed for the crown of martyrdom. The peril that faced him was not vague. "Any papist," according to the statute 27 Elizabeth, c. 2, "born in the dominions of the crown of England, who should come over thither from beyond the sea (unless driven by stress of weather, and tarrying only a reasonable time), or should be in England three days without conforming and taking the oath, should be guilty of high treason." Southwell knew that a Jesuit was doubly obnoxious to the herd of Englishmen who blindly followed time-serving leaders; he knew, too, that if discovered he would be hanged, drawn, and quartered. He did not shrink. Perhaps he reverently repeated the words of his "Burning Babe":—

"Love is the fire and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and  
scorns.

The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy blows the coals;  
The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defiled souls;  
For which, as now on fire I am, to work them to their good,  
So will I melt into a bath, to wash them in my blood."

Southwell's letter to his father, which he wrote soon after his return to England, shows that the poet who wrote "St. Peter's Complaint" might as easily have spoken an *apologia* before the despots who in England imitated the persecutions of Diocletian in the name of "reformation."

For six years Southwell labored in his native land. Many Catholic souls, even priests in hiding, were

strengthened by his example and consoled by his fervent piety. His zeal made many return to the Church and saved others from apostasy. Protected by Lady Arundel, whose confessor he was, he performed his sacred duties and wrote at intervals; but the crown of martyrdom, like a pillar of fire, was always before him. It led to the Promised Land, and he was soon to gain the end for which he worked. He was kept in prison three years. At last, on his own petition, he was brought to trial. He was removed from the Tower of London to Newgate, and on the 21st of February, 1595, he was taken to Westminster and tried. His conduct before the court was worthy of his life. He was serene, manly, and not presumptuous. He denied that he was guilty of treason, but confessed that he was a Catholic priest, and that his purpose in England was to administer the rites of the Church to her faithful children. He was condemned, and on the morning of the 22d of February was executed at Tyburn. Through the blundering of the hangman his agony was prolonged, and he "several times made the sign of the cross while hanging." He was drawn and quartered; but "through the kindness and interference of the bystanders the martyr was allowed to die before the indignities and mutilations were allowed." And this happened in the reign of a woman whom historians have named "good," and whom Englishmen have been taught to reverence as "great"!

Southwell's principal works were *St. Peter's Complaint*, *Mary Magdalen's Tears*, and a book in prose, *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*. One poem of his, "Times go by Turns," is quoted almost as generally as Cardinal Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light."

76. In the year 1600 and after it, there was a great outburst of romantic poetry in England. Shakspeare, when not yet great, had written poems whose sensuousness is to be regretted. Thomas Lodge and Henry Constable, both Catholics, Thomas Carew, and others were of this romantic school. Spenser had led the way by his love-sonnets called *Amoretti*, and Sir Philip Sidney had also set the fashion by imitating the lighter poems of the Italians. William Drummond of Hawthornden was a Scotch poet of this period; he belongs properly to the time of James I., but he was evidently influenced by Sidney and Spenser.

77. William Warner, Samuel Daniel, and Michael Drayton were born about 1560, and were writers of patriotic poetry. They gave poetry a national flavor. William Warner wrote *Albion's England*, 1586, which sketches a history of England from the Deluge to the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Samuel Daniel wrote a *History of the Civil Wars*, 1595, in admirable English, but bad poetry. In James I.'s reign (1613) Michael Drayton produced *Polyolbion*, in thirty books, written in Alexandrines. He had written before this time the *Civil Wars of Edward*

*II. and the Barons and England's Heroical Epistles.* Drayton deserves to be ranked among English poets, though he wrote too much. The philosophical poets who came into fashion as England became less in fear of war are Sir John Davies and Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke. Sir John Davies was the author of *Nosce te ipsum, Know Thyself*, and *The Orchestra*, and Lord Brooke wrote long didactic poems *On Human Learning, On Wars, On Monarchy*, and *On Religion*. But the great literary feature of the Elizabethan period was the rise of the drama to a grandeur unprophesied and unexpected.

78. **The English Drama** began in the monasteries, where miracle plays were performed on certain feasts. A survival of these is the Passion Play given every ten years at Oberammergau, in Bavaria, by the peasants. It had gradually developed in England until Nicholas Udall wrote the first English comedy, *Ralph Roister Doister*, which was acted in 1551. The first English tragedy was *Gorboduc* or *Ferrex* and *Porrex* written by Sackville and Norton, and played in 1562. There was no play-house in England until The Theatre was built at London in 1576. The Globe Theatre was built for Shakspeare and his actors in 1599. Boys took the parts of women; it would have been considered indecent if a woman had appeared as *Rosalind*, in *As You Like It*, or as *Portia*, in *The Merchant of Venice*; even *Cordelia*, the most gentle of Shakspeare's char-

acters, except *Ophelia*, was acted by a boy. It was not until the licentious reign of Charles II. that females appeared on the stage and an attempt to have painted scenes was made. Shakspeare's plays were originally performed without illusory accessories. If the great poet could see the modern superb mounting of *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, he would no doubt feel repaid for a journey back to "the glimpses of the moon." In his time a blanket was used for a curtain, and the audience, which assembled at three o'clock, imagined trees, castles, gardens, etc.

79. **The Play-writers before Shakspeare** were: George Gascoigne, who wrote the *Supposes* (acted in 1566, and taken from the Italian of Ariosto); Arthur Brooke, whose *Romeo and Juliet* may have suggested Shakspeare's — it is taken from the same story, — and T. Hughes' *Misfortunes of Arthur* and the *Famous Victories of Henry V.* Then came — from 1580 to 1596 — Peele, Nash, Chettle, Munday, Greene, Lodge, Kyd, Marlowe, and Lyly, the author of *Euphues*. The greatest of these was Marlowe.

80. **Christopher Marlowe** would have been a high name in English literature, had the personal character of the man who bore it been equal to his genius. He was born at Canterbury in England, in February, 1564. He was educated at the King's School in his birthplace, and at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. His father was a shoemaker, and when

Marlowe developed atheistical opinions, there were men who openly regretted that he had not been forcibly kept to his father's business. But we see too much that is fine in his plays to endorse their opinions. Marlowe served with Elizabeth's troops in the Netherlands, during the war of the Low Countries with Spain; in the army, the tone of which was very licentious, he acquired the Godless opinions and coarseness that unhappily found its way into some of his literary work. His translations of Ovid's *Elegies* gained the reprobation of moral Englishmen, and were burned by the hangman. His *Hero and Leander* and *Tamburlaine* are too coarse to be read without expurgation. Freed from the dirt that encumbers it, *Tamburlaine* is a great drama. As Hallam says, Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* is a sketch by a great genius rather than a finished and complete play. The same verdict might be given of *Edward II.*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. Marlowe was a poet of great promise, worthy to be a star that could only be dimmed by such a sun as Shakspeare. He died as he had lived; he was killed in a brawl at Deptford, in 1593.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Shakspeare*

81. **When Spenser was a youth, Shakspeare was a boy.** — Spenser, whom Wordsworth names

“ —— mild Spenser, called from fairy land  
To struggle through dark ways,”

died in January, 1598. Spenser was twelve years old when Shakspeare was born; and Shakspeare was thirty-four years old when Spenser died.

Spenser, the most poetical of poets, greatest after Chaucer, was inspired by Italian genius. You have heard, and you will hear again, that

“ —— those melodious bursts that fill  
The spacious times of great Elizabeth  
With sounds that echo still,”<sup>1</sup>

were the results of the change in religion, which followed the rebellion of Henry VIII. This assumption is a sign of ignorance. What Chaucer owed to Dante and Petrarca, Spenser owed to Tasso and

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson.

Ariosto. Without these great Italians — who were ardently Catholic — English poetry would perhaps now be only beginning to find suitable forms of expression. Let us rid ourselves at once of this fallacy. If English poetry exists to-day unrivalled in sweetness, strength, and symmetry, it is because Wyatt and Surrey, Spenser and Shakspeare, Milton and Dryden, made the best use of those stores of classic lore and poetic forms which Christian ages had developed. Had Wyatt and Surrey not borrowed from the Italians, Shakspeare would not have had models of the sonnet and of blank verse in his native speech; and had he not borrowed from the mediæval *Gesta Romanorum*, and from the Italians too, he would have found less stimulating themes on which to employ his wonder-working genius.

Of Spenser, James Russell Lowell, one of our greatest poets and the most careful of our critics, says: —

“No man can read the ‘Faery Queen’ and be anything but the better for it. Through that rude age when Maids of Honor drank beer for breakfast . . . he passes serenely abstracted and high, the Don Quixote of poets. Whoever can endure unmixed delight, whoever can tolerate music and painting and poetry all in one, whoever wishes to be rid of thought, and to let the busy anvils of the brain be silent for a time, let him read in the ‘Faery Queen.’ There is the land of pure heart’s ease, where no ache or sorrow of spirit can enter.”



82. There is in most biographies of Spenser an exaggeration. It is well to correct it. Spenser, as you know, was sent into Ireland as shrieve for the county of Cork. Ireland then, as now, was chafing under English rule; and even a great poet coming into that land with a commission from Queen Elizabeth was made to feel that he had no business there. The kerns and gallow-glasses arose — indeed, they had provocation enough — and burned his castle. He probably had warning, as Mr. Lowell says, of the wrath to come, and sent his wife and his four children into Cork. At any rate, there is no foundation, except rumor, for the assertion that one of his boys perished in the flames. Spenser looked on the Irish as savages and their country as a wilderness, and no doubt he was glad to find more congenial quarters, with two cantos of his poem, in London. Spenser died in moderate circumstances, but he was not poor.

It would be ungracious and ungrateful to point out a withered leaf in the laurels of so great a poet, but we cannot help regretting that he was so much of a courtier, and that he had less of that love for the quiet of rural beauty than that greatest of all English poets who succeeded him. His lavish praise of the "bold Eliza," who was rampant like a blood-thirsty lioness on the English throne, is a blot on his work. The poet of chivalry who could allegorically represent the murder of Mary Stuart in

that division of the "Faerie Queene" called "Justice," must have lacked some of the qualities of true chivalry. Shakspeare, too, lived under the rule of Queen Elizabeth, who reigned because her father's true wife, Katharine of Aragon, had been driven forth from her rightful place; still, we find this meek, yet stately Katharine, made one of the most noble figures in all the poet's plays. Even, as some critics assert, if *Henry VIII.* were the last of Shakspeare's dramas and written in the reign of James I., the successor of Elizabeth, the high soul of the poet is none the less evident.

83. **The Play of "Henry VIII."** — It has been remarked by many critics that the play of *Henry VIII.*, in spite of some of the noblest writing possible to any man, is weak dramatically. Lord Tennyson acutely pointed out the reason of this. *Henry VIII.* was written by two different hands. It has been settled beyond question that the incongruous and joyous fifth act was written by Fletcher. In this act, King Henry, notwithstanding the awful iniquity of his treatment of Queen Katharine, is promised future happiness in a mock-marriage with Anne Boleyn. All that is great and noble and pathetic in the play is Shakspeare's; the rest is by a more ignoble hand.

We find no flings at the Catholic Church, or the Pope, made to please Queen Elizabeth or King James. Cardinal Wolsey, in his fall, is a dignified

figure, and Katharine, true to nature, a superbly noble one. Having read Shakspeare's plays and taken into consideration the circumstances of the time — at once so splendid and so mean — when Catholics were persecuted to death with horrible cruelties, one can hardly help thinking that William Shakspeare must have been in his heart of that ancient and proscribed Faith. It seems to have inspired him when he was at his best. How easy it would have been for him to have cast jibes at those Jesuits, like Southwell, who suffered death by command of this "great Elizabeth," or have pleased the tyrant by belying the character of her victim, Mary Stuart! Easy? No; on second thoughts, it would have been impossible, for William Shakspeare was the truest and most tender-hearted gentleman and the greatest genius that England ever produced.

84. **The Historical Data.**— Let us go back to the year 1571. Mary Stuart pined in her prison between hope and fear. Elizabeth had done her best to extirpate every drop of Catholic blood from English soil, and Pius V., less clement than his predecessor on the Papal throne, had excommunicated the queen. The air of England throbbed with rumors of deeds of blood, with prophecies of strange things to come. And yet there were nooks in that country where peace dwelt. The town of Stratford-upon-Avon, nestling among elms, oaks, and chestnuts, in

Warwickshire, "the garden spot of England," lay as it lies to-day. The sod around it is velvet; the Avon sweeps to the Severn, casting back the sunlight as it goes; and so it flowed in 1571, when Will Shakspeare, hazel-eyed and auburn-haired, leaned over his Latin Grammar in the schoolhouse at Stratford. He was a very small boy then,—only seven years of age,—but boys began to study Latin early. The school-room had been the Chapel of the Holy Cross for nearly three hundred years until Henry VIII. defaced it; nevertheless, the boy's eyes rested on a series of rude paintings on the wall representing the origin of the cross and its history, ending with its exaltation at Jerusalem. Knowing this, can we wonder that Shakspeare in after life was always reverent and Christian?

In *As You Like It*, he makes Jaques describe

" . . . the whining schoolboy, with his satchel,  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school ;"

and we may be sure that young Will, with all the beauty of his father's orchards and meadows and all the sports of boys to tempt him, did not hasten willingly to school. And when he went a schoolboy from his books, it was to his father's cottage, which stands yet. It is a little two-story house, with dormer windows in the roof. Its great oak beams and plastered walls are much the same as they were when little Will ran home to beg some comfits of

his mother, or to tell of the day's woes. Here in the low-ceiled, flag-floored room, in a seat within the huge fireplace, the boy sat of winter nights and roasted the chestnuts he had gathered during his precious leisure time, while the crab-apples simmered in the bowl. He himself sings of the winter evenings:—

“When icicles hang by the wall,  
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,  
And Tom bears logs into the hall  
And milk comes frozen home in pail,  
When blood is nipped and ways be foul,  
Then nightly sings the staring owl.”

In the summer the days of the boy at Stratford were glorious, despite the strict parental discipline then in vogue. We can imagine the auburn-haired little fellow, with humorous but grave eyes, standing on the rush-strewn floor and demurely waiting on his parents as they sat at table. The table had, perhaps, a “carpet,” as they called a cloth,—for carpets were not put on the floors even of the queen's palace in 1571,—and it was a good boy's business to lay it.

85. **Shakspere in Summer.**—In the spring and summer he absorbed all that beauty which he gave out later in his plays, in pictures of flowers and the seasons, such as no poet before or after him could have done. The boards in the floor of his father's cottage are white to-day and worn, and the

nails in them have heads like polished silver; but the same flowers that bloomed around Stratford in the spring and the summer of 1571 bloomed and withered in the summer and autumn of this year.

The peas-blossom nodded and the honeysuckle wafted its perfume; the bees and swallows, and the same shrill corn-crake that made the little Will forget his declensions and shy a stone at it, revelled in the sun of 1891. The Avon swells among its tangles of wild-flowers and reeds, and broods of ducklings hide among the wild thyme of the banks, and swim on its serene surface. The white chestnut blooms fall; the crimson roses flame in the old garden. Across the fields towards the little house of the Hathaways, where Shakspeare's wife lived, the glowing poppies make trails of fire among the soft, velvety green. In these fields Will played prisoner's base with his brothers, Richard, Gilbert, and Edmund. Here he saw the picture he paints in *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, where he makes Oberon say:

“ I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where ox lips and the nodding violet grows;  
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,  
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine.”

In the spring, he found by the Avon Ophelia's flowers, those which in her gentle madness, after Hamlet has killed her father, she offers to the court.

“ There's fennel for you and columbines; there's rue for you, and here's some for me: we may call it

herb-grace o' Sundays. . . . There's a daisy; *I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died. They say he made a good end.*" And in the spring, by his own Avon, too, the flowers he weaves into the Queen's speech when she tells how the crazed Ophelia died:—

"There is a willow grows aslant a brook,  
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;  
There, with fantastic garlands, did she come,  
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies and long purples;  
There on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds  
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke,  
When down her weedy trophies and herself  
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,  
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:  
Which time, she chanted snatches of old tunes,  
As one incapable of her own distress,  
Or like a creature native and indu'ed  
Unto that element; but long it could not be,  
Till that her garments heavy with their drink  
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay  
To muddy death."

By the Avon's banks in the early spring this exquisite glimpse was photographed in colors by his eye, and afterwards reproduced in *Winter's Tale*:

" . . . daffodils  
That come before the swallow dares, and take  
The winds of March with beauty; violets, dim,  
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes  
Or Cytherea's breath; pale primroses  
 . . . bold ox-lips and  
The crown imperial, lilies of all kinds,  
The flower-du-luce being one."

Now when you visit Stratford you may get all the flowers mentioned by Ophelia fastened to a sheet of paper, even the violet that "withered when her father died." You may also get a strip of paper with the famous inscription marked in black on it—that famous inscription which has saved Shakspeare's tomb from desecration. The guide will go down on his knees and trace it for you in the quaint old form :

" Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed here,  
Blessed be the man that spares these stones,  
And cursed be he that moves my bones."

86. **Shakspeare's Education.** — Shakspeare's father was anxious that his children should be educated well; and so for seven years the boy was kept at the Grammar school, which the religious-minded men of the Catholic time had founded and kept alive. By the time he left school his father had become poor. He went into some business or other,—perhaps he was a lawyer's clerk, no one knows. His father, John Shakspeare, did the best he could for his eldest son, and if Will had "small Latin and less Greek," he had enough to teach his younger brothers all they needed; this he probably did. Mr. Kegan Paul says :

"It is certain that in the years during which he was at school and in his father's business, he read not many



books, but much ; and he learned that which ought to be the aim of all boyish education, not to cram the memory with facts and figures, but how to use all that comes to us in life."

There is a story that he shot one of Sir Thomas Lucy's deer and was punished for poaching. Charlecot, Sir Thomas Lucy's place, is about three miles from Stratford. The house in which the indignant owner of the deer lived still stands ; you approach it through paths bordered with hawthorn, blush roses, beeches, and elms, and over turf soft because a thousand years have rolled over it. In *As You Like It*, Shakspeare describes the English forest of Arden — from which his mother, Mary Arden, probably took her name — which is really No Man's Land, for there they "fleet their time carelessly, as they did in the golden world," and though the forest is supposed to be in France — that of Ardennes — lions and palm trees lived in it. This comedy is the most lyrical drama ever written. In this strange forest the "melancholy Jaques," supposed to typify Shakspeare himself, sees a deer, —

" . . . as he lay along  
Under an oak whose antique root peeps out  
Upon the brook that brawls along this wood ;  
To which place a poor, sequestered stag,  
That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt,  
Did come to languish ; and indeed, my lord,  
The writhed animal heav'd forth such groans

That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat  
Almost to bursting ; and the big round tears  
Coursed one another down his innocent nose  
In piteous chase : and thus the hairy fool,  
Much marked of the melancholy Jaques,  
Stood on the extremest verge of the swift brook.”

87. **Shakspeare's Son Hamnet or Hamlet.** — Whether Shakspeare killed Sir Thomas Lucy's deer or not, he had seen a wounded deer and he knew how to make the world see it with his eyes — a supreme gift in a writer. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway, whose cottage still stands about a mile from Stratford. In this little house, to which ivy and running roses cling, they probably lived with their children, Susanna, who married Dr. Hall, and the twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet died young, and Judith, about whom William Black has written a charming story, called *Judith Shakspeare*, became Mrs. Quiney. No descendant of Shakspeare bearing his name is now alive.

Things went badly at Stratford. He had not yet learned to coin the sobs of the stricken deer or the scent of the musk-roses into money. He went to London, bidding his wife and children be hopeful in the rural nest at Stratford. And there he found success. It is said that he took in his pocket his first poem, and that this attracted the attention of Lord Southampton and Lord Pembroke, two of the most brilliant of Elizabeth's courtiers.

We cannot know what books Shakspeare read in order to prepare himself to meet and dazzle the wits of this witty time, for the only volume of his that has come down to us is a translation of the French essayist Montaigne, of whose influence one can find traces in his plays. We know he had read the Scripture, and that he found

“ . . . tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything. ”

In London, which was not then the great city it is now, the young rustic saw much to amuse him. How he became an actor, we do not know. It is said that he performed in his own plays—the part of Adam, for instance, in *As You Like It*. One thing is sure: he loved his family, and returned to Stratford at stated intervals with his heart set on rescuing his old father from poverty and of making his wife and children comfortable. He longed for the time when he could settle down among the primrose fields and blooming orchards of his native place, and leave the glitter of the court and city and the glare of the play-house to others. Shakspeare did not seek for fame, or for money as money; he made his marvellous dramas for the great end that he might make his father happy and his children happy—that he might, at the end, live pleasantly and peacefully among the scenes which he knew and loved as a boy. He “buildded better than he knew.” He was so careless as to the printing of his noble

works that, had it not been for the care of two of his fellow-actors, the greatest of these great plays would have been lost to us. In 1623 — seven years after his death — the first folio edition of his plays was issued by Heminges and Condell. If they had been less solicitous for his fame, it would have died with him.

88. **Spenser Praises Shakspeare.**—Shakspeare was early recognized as a poet. Spenser praised him; he was king among the wits, a star among the nobles. Ben Jonson, the most learned among his contemporaries, hailed him when living and extolled him when dead. Success and wealth came. But all the while Shakspeare was thinking of Stratford-upon-Avon. In those days every gentleman had a coat of arms. Shakspeare revived the arms of his family during his father's lifetime; they were, in heraldic language, a pointed spear on a bend sable and a silver falcon on a tasselled helmet, supporting a spear. An allusion to this bearing of arms occurs in the grave-digging scene of *Hamlet*. The second grave-digger asks if Adam was a gentleman.

*First Clown.* . . . the first that ever bore arms.

*Second Clown.* Why, he had none.

*First Clown.* What, art a heathen? The Scripture says, Adam digged; could he dig without arms?"

In London, Shakspeare met Marlowe, who, if he had not died early, would have more nearly ap-

proached our master than any other. *Richard III.* shows the influence of Marlowe, and parts of *Henry VI.* were written by him. Shakspeare laughed at the fashions of the day — the absurd costumes of the men and the euphuistic affectations of their speech — as satirically as Hamlet laughs at Osric, the “dude,” in that great drama of thought. He never fails to fling at women’s false hair and face-paintings, and the tyrannies of the ladies’ tailors. Autolycus’ song, in *Winter’s Tale*, shows that he knew the needs of the ladies of 1611 or thereabouts: —

“Lawn as white as driven snow,  
Cyprus<sup>1</sup> black as e’er was crow,  
Glove as sweet as damask roses,  
Masks for faces and for noses,  
Bugle, bracelet, necklace-amber,  
Perfume for a lady’s chamber.”

89. **Shakspeare’s Later Life.**— What little we know of Shakspeare’s later life we must gather from his plays, for there is no other record. His first farce was probably *The Comedy of Errors*. It is a huge joke. Then came *Midsummer-Night’s Dream*, a fantasy of moonlight, spiders’ webs with dew upon them, flowers, fairies, and queer monsters, all seen in the atmosphere of a poet’s dream. After these, *Love’s Labour Won*, recast as *All’s Well That Ends Well*, and the Italian stories, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Romeo and Juliet*.

<sup>1</sup> Crape.

From these we gather that Will Shakspeare was generous, impetuous, gay, with a tear for suffering and a heart full of affection, and, like his heroes withal, fond of a practical jest. His first period ended with *King John*, in which one of the few children drawn by Shakspeare is so pathetically presented in Prince Arthur. In 1596, he entered his second period, with the most perfect of all his comedies, *The Merchant of Venice*. He had reached the prime of his manhood. Here we have a high type of womanhood in Portia, feminine, yet almost more than a woman in her desire to save her husband's friend, and Shylock, the Jew, in whom the best attributes of a great race have been turned to evil by the un-Christian persecution of Christians — the generous Antonio, the graceful Bassanio, and the beautiful, but ungrateful Jessica. Then came the *Taming of the Shrew*, an old farce retouched; the three plays in which Sir John Falstaff appears, — the two parts of *Henry IV.* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; and the splendid historical pageant of *Henry V.* The comedies he wrote for the Globe Theatre, in which he had a share, sparkle with gaiety and the lighter poetry: *Much Ado About Nothing*, with the saucy Beatrice; *As You Like It*, with the brilliant Rosalind and the "melancholy Jaques," who was a precursor in sadness of the deep despondency of Hamlet; then *Twelfth Night*, and *All's Well That Ends Well*. In 1602, Shakspeare

had got his wish, as the children say, and it was moderate enough. At the age of forty-three — about the age at which Milton was struck by blindness, with his life-work hardly begun, — he was rich and honored. But shadows fell upon him. Hamnet, his son, was dead; there would be none of his name to bear the coat of arms he had so eagerly desired. This was not the worst; he had been betrayed by some friend whom he had trusted — as we see by the mysterious sonnets, which are as hard to read as the riddle of the Sphinx and as fraught with meaning. Some day we may find that they had a religious significance, and that the poet puts yearnings and hopes into them which he dare not utter more plainly.

90. **The Loved Friends.**— His great and noble friends were beheaded or exiled. Avarice and all evil passions ruled the court; “the time was out of joint,” and the poet, like Hamlet, could not put it right. He becomes more gloomy; no more light comedies, only the darkest tragedies. *Julius Cæsar*, written in 1601, means his grief for the ruin of his friends. Then follow *Hamlet*, expressing crime and the vanity of trying to escape its punishment; *Othello*, jealousy and murder; *Macbeth*, inordinate ambition; *Lear*, horrible ingratitude; *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, and *Timon*. Later, the *Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, and *Winter’s Tale*, in which the flowers of Stratford bloom again, and we feel that the bruised heart has found

rest in country sights and sounds. Last of all, he wrote with Fletcher the nobler parts of *Henry VIII.*, in 1612. Later writers made his sketch of *Marina* into the play of *Pericles*. He lived among his flowers and books, tended by his favorite daughter Judith, at his house, New Place, in Stratford, until peace came to him on May 3, 1616. He passed from earth in the fifty-second year of his age, having made an epoch in the world.

91. **His Religion.** — Tradition says that Shakspeare was ever gentle to those of the persecuted Faith of his fathers;<sup>1</sup> and his plays show it. New Place, at Stratford, is no more, only the foundations remain. Puritanism destroyed all that Henry VIII.'s brutality had left, or perhaps we should know more of this gentle man. His daughter, Judith Quiney, became a Puritan, and in her desire to eradicate all vestiges of the play-acting of her beloved father, she doubtless destroyed many traces of his thoughts and acts which we would now dwell on with love. If we can take the testimony of the personages he created whenever they were in extremity, we must conclude that he at least understood the religious beliefs his fathers had held.

It is true that he wrote words that he ought to have blotted. Let *us* blot them out, and know them not. His nobility is so high that they, like plucked-up weeds, may perish in its shadow.

<sup>1</sup> Judith Shakspeare : William Black.



To read his works carefully, under competent direction, is an education. What has he not said? Each reading brings out some new meaning.

The most bigoted unbeliever must admit that Shakspeare was deeply Christian in belief. Reverence fills his plays like the breath of incense. Mr. Frederick Furnivall, one of the acutest of modern critics, reaches this conclusion heartily. Shakspeare declares his belief in the immortality of the soul —

“And Death once dead, there’s no more dying then.”

92. **His belief in immortality.** — His speech is “saturated with the Scriptures.” How could he help it? Had he not in the schoolroom gazed every day on the painted story of the Cross, and read everywhere, in spite of Henry VIII.’s barbarity, the symbolism of the Church which had filled the life of England before the Reformation with the beauty of God’s word? Though the statues of the saints were broken, and their figures in the stained-glass windows defaced, the Church of the Holy Trinity still pointed with its spire towards heaven. Even in Shakspeare’s later time, all remembrance of the Sacramental Presence could not have faded out of Stratford. We can imagine Shakspeare walking in the gloaming towards this old church, with its Gothic windows and fretted battlements. The glow-worms waver near him as he comes through the avenue of green lime trees, near the beech- and yew-shaded

graveyard. He has come by the shining Avon, from "the lonesome meadows beyond where the primroses stand in their golden banks among the clover, and the frilled and fluted bell of the cowslip, hiding its single drop of blood, closes its petals as the night comes down."<sup>1</sup> He pauses in the nave of the church, and there in the soft glow, cast by the last shaft of glory from the setting sun, he sees the vacant place where, his father has told him, the tabernacle had been. It is gone. Perchance an old woman, who had seen the Faith in its glory, lies prostrate, sobbing before the despoiled altar whence her God has been torn. And then he murmurs, with his own dying Queen Katharine :—

"Spirits of peace, where are you? Are ye all gone  
And leave me here in wretchedness behind ye?"

93. **His Death.** — And, folding his hands at his back, he passes back through that sweet-scented lane, whose blossoms shall fall on his own coffin ere long. His eyes are soft and hazel; his cheeks are not so ruddy as when he laid the cloth for his father and mother in earlier days; his forehead is dome-like; he wears his customary suit of scarlet and black; so he goes to New Place, for which he has so long worked, to the demure Judith who waits for him, to his little chubby-cheeked grandchild, Bess Hall. The antlers in the entry, the silver tankards

<sup>1</sup> William Winter.

on the side-board, of which his wife and Judith are so proud, show dimly in the falling night; he murmurs the new song he has lately made for his play of *Cymbeline*:

“ Fear no more the heat o’ the sun,  
Nor the furious winter’s rages;  
Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
Home art gone and ta’en thy wages.”

A swan glides slowly to her nest among the reeds of the Avon. “ The crimson drops i’ the bottom of the cowslip ”<sup>1</sup> are now quite hid from the sight of the swallow that westward flies across the meadows. William Shakspeare, whom God gifted so gloriously, passes with the sadness of the gloaming in his soul. “ And the rest is silence.”

<sup>1</sup> *Cymbeline*.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Minor Dramatists and Ben Jonson. The Lyricists.* 1596-1654.

94. It would be a mistake to imagine that the English people of the reigns of Henry VIII., Elizabeth, and King Charles II., were all Protestants in the modern sense. Lodge, Southwell, Constable, Shirley, Crashaw, and Habington, were Catholic writers, popular with Englishmen. The final revolt against the Church was due to the ill-advised and bigoted policy of James II. It was political.

95. Ben Jonson wavered between the Church and Protestantism and finally accepted the latter, arguing that he was a good Protestant because he drank all the wine he could during the ceremony of the "Lord's Supper." This expression will probably give you the key to the personal character of the man. He had genius; he was rough, swaggering, even brutal, a scholar and sometimes a cynic; he admired his great contemporary, Shakspeare, though they were widely different. Jonson had great stores of learning, and Shakspeare had never been a stu-

dent, except of men and nature. Jonson's genius seems like talent when compared with Shakspeare's. Jonson's dramas, great as they are, mark the beginning of the decline of dramatic art in England. He was born in 1573, and was educated at Westminster School, and, according to some authorities, at St. John's College, Cambridge. Jonson rejoiced in putting action before words, and his plays consequently lack the exquisite diction of Shakspeare's in which the action is suited to the word and the word to the action. His dramatic characters are named for their intentions or actions; he does not trust them to show what they are. Morose is, for instance, the name of a man in *Epicæne, or The Silent Woman*; Cutbeard is the name of a barber in the same play, and Subtle that of the hero of *The Alchemist*. Jonson was thrown into prison for having killed a man in a duel. While in prison he became a Catholic, and was evidently sincere. His subsequent reversion to the Anglican Church was probably the result of carelessness and the difficulty of practising his adopted religion at a time when to be a Catholic was to be a criminal in the eyes of the law. *Sejanus*, his first play, appeared in 1603. *Every Man in his Humour* was played in 1596-'98. This comedy was followed by *Every Man out of his Humour*; *Cynthia's Revels*; and, in James I.'s reign, *Volpone, or The Fox*; *The Silent Woman*; *The Alchemist*; and, after an interval, *Catiline*, a tragedy.

In 1619 he was made poet laureate. He died in 1637. His last play, *The Sad Shepherd*, is his sweetest. Jonson's masques — lyrical plays very much in vogue at court during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. — show that he had the finest poetic feeling, in addition to his learning, for which he is always praised. There is a description of one of his masques in Sir Walter Scott's novel of *Kenilworth*. Jonson wrote few songs. The best of them is paraphrased from the Latin and occurs in *Epicæne, or The Silent Woman*. It begins: —

“ Still to be neat, still to be drest,  
 As you were going to a feast;  
 Still to be powdered, still perfumed;  
 Lady, it is to be presumed,  
 Though Art's hid causes are not found,  
 All is not sweet, all is not sound.”

During the last years of his life he was acknowledged as the greatest man of letters in England. He died in London, August 6, 1637. Collections of his epistles and lyrics were made under the general names of the *Underwoods* and *The Forest*. Ben Jonson's poem to Shakspeare was prefixed to the first folio-edition of Shakspeare's works, printed in 1623. In it, he calls the great poet —

“ Soul of the age!  
 The applause, the delight, the wonder of our stage.”

96. **Beaumont and Fletcher.** — John Fletcher, born at Rye, Sussex, in December, 1579, and Francis

Beaumont, born about 1584, wrote some plays remarkable for their power. *Philaster* and *The Maid's Tragedy* are the most remarkable. Fletcher wrote a charming lyrical poem, *The Faithful Shepherdess*. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is said to have been written by Shakspeare and Fletcher. It is impossible to tell what part Beaumont or Fletcher contributed to the joint plays. They wrote exquisite lyrics. It is regrettable that their dramas are too coarse to be read with enjoyment in our times. Although they wrote fine poetry now and then, they were untrue to human nature. Beaumont died in 1616, Fletcher in 1625.

97. **Thomas Dekker, John Ford, John Webster, George Chapman, John Marston, Henry Claphorne, Richard Browne, William Rowley, Thomas Middleton, Cyril Tourneur, Thomas Heywood, and James Shirley,** came after Massinger and Ford.

98. **James Shirley,** though a boy when Elizabeth died, was the last of the glorious band of dramatists associated with her name and reign. He was born at London in 1596, and was educated at the Merchant-Tailors' School and at St. John's College, Oxford; from St. John's he went to Cambridge received orders and got a cure near St. Albans which he gave up, from religious convictions, and embraced the Catholic faith. We next find Shirley as a dramatist in London, smiled on by fortune and the court, in the person of Charles I.'s Queen, who  
L. of C.

admired his genius and his Catholicity. In 1637 he crossed to Ireland, and wrote some plays which were performed at the first theatre ever erected in Dublin. On his return he took part in the civil war, fighting, of course, on the side of the King, and in his later life he gave up dramatizing and taught school. Shirley was a man of upright and irreproachable character and a devout Catholic.

His first play was a comedy entitled *Love's Tricks* (1625). From this period till 1641, his dramas followed in rapid succession. In 1646 he published a volume of love poems, and two small volumes of masques in 1653 and 1659. Shirley's verse while not markedly original, is elegant and forceful and has the true Elizabethan ring. He died in 1666.

99. **Ford and Massinger, Webster and Chapman**, who made the fine translation of Homer immortalized in Keats' fine sonnet, were dark and impassioned in tragedy, but they lacked naturalness.

Massinger's first play was *The Virgin Martyr*, dated 1620. His best known drama is *The New Way to Pay Old Debts*, which centres on the character of Sir Giles Overreach. Massinger died in 1640. He is truer to humanity than Beaumont or Fletcher; his language is unhappily often indecent; but he understood that the highest thing on earth is a good man or woman's remaining true to God in spite of all obstacles. John Ford published *The Lover's Melancholy*, in 1629, and *Perkin Warbeck*, which has been pro-



nounced to be the best historic drama since Shakspeare. The *Broken Heart* is a drama of horrors. John Webster, too, revelled in horrors and ghastliness. His most important play was *The Duchess of Malfi*, acted in 1616; *Vittoria Corombona* (1612) was followed by *The Devil's Law Case*, *Appius and Virginia*, and the comedies *Westward Ho!* and *Northward Ho!* In these he was assisted by Dekker.

100. **Sir Henry Wotton (1568–1639)**, whose memoir was written by that genial-souled angler Izaak Walton, wrote two poems, viz.: *The Character of a Happy Life* (1614), and the lines *On His Mistress the Queen of Bohemia* (1620), which have secured a permanent place in English literature.

101. **Thomas Carew (1598–1639)** is the first in time, the second in genius, of that band of Royalist lyrists who graced the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Herrick alone surpasses Carew in the delicacy and subtle charm of his lyrics, and Carew has the added merit of being the inventor of that courtly amorous poetry which characterized the reign of Charles I. and his successor. His best poem, *The Rapture*, is unhappily disfigured by the loose moral tone of his age, and cannot be laid before the general reader; but most of his lyrics are freshly and purely conceived. Carew, Edmund Gosse well says, "is a transitional figure; he holds Shakspeare with one hand and Congreve with the other, and leads us

down the hill of the seventeenth century by a path more flowery and of easier incline than any of his compeers; yet we must never forget, in considering his historical position, that his chief merit lies, after all, in his fresh coloring and sincere passion."

102. **Robert Herrick** was born in Cheapside, in August, 1591, and died at Dean-Prior, October 15, 1674. In 1648, he published *Hesperides*. Herrick, like Horace, may be said to have lived an ideal life for a poet; his twenty years of Arcadian repose in Dean-Priory, Devonshire, were preceded by an even more cultured seclusion of fourteen years. He is the first of the English pastoral poets, and in the front rank of the lyrists, and in the twelve hundred songs and lyrics that remain to us we gather the rich fruit of this retirement. The average merit of Herrick's verse is very high, and in such lyrics as *To Blossoms* and *To Daffodils* he has produced gems which will not pale in comparison with anything of the kind in the whole range of literature.

103. **George Sandys** (1577-1644) wrote a fine translation of Ovid (1626), which has the unique distinction of having been the first English poem written on the American continent, whither Sandys had come as secretary. (*Vide* Hist. Amer. Lit. by Moses Coit Tyler, vol. i.)

104. **George Herbert** (1593-1633) was public orator at Cambridge and afterward rector of Bemerton in Wiltshire. He wrote the *Temple* (1631), the

purity and devotion of the poems contained in which have earned for it a lasting reputation. With Herbert is usually associated his disciple, *Henry Vaughan* (1621–1695), whose poems breathe the same spirit of quaint unworldly mysticism.

105. **Thomas Randolph (1605–1634)**, who died at the early age of thirty, gave much promise as a poet. His drama, *The Jealous Lovers*, was printed in 1632; his other works appearing posthumously. He had much of the Elizabethan vigor in his best passages, and his *Cotswold Eelogue* ranks justly high among English pastoral poems. *Abraham Cowley* (1618–1667) is another poet of this period. He is best known by *A Wish*.

106. **Thomas Lodge (1558–1625)** was the son of Sir Thomas Lodge, one of London's lord mayors, and a Catholic. Lodge studied at Oxford and then went to Avignon, where he was graduated doctor of medicine. In London on his return he became a successful dramatist and poet, and a popular physician. His works include novels, pamphlets, sonnets, elegies and some plays. His first play was entitled: *The Wounds of Civil War lively set forth in the Tragedies of Marius and Sylla* (1591), and was published in 1594. In partnership with Robert Greene he wrote *A Looking-glass for London and England*. His other important works are: *Rosalynde Euphues' Golden Legacy* (1590), *Phyllis* (1593), and *A Margarite of America* (1596). Thomas Lodge died

of the plague at Low Leyton, in Essex, in 1625. "In some respects," says Mr. Edmund Gosse, "Lodge is superior to most of the lyrical poets of his time. He is certainly the best of the Euphuists, and no one rivalled him in the creation of a dreamy scene, 'out of space, out of time,' where the loves and the jousts of an ideal chivalry would be pleasantly tempered by tending of sheep." This is high praise, and nobly does Lodge deserve it. It will be remembered how much Lodge's *Rosalynde* colored Shakspeare's treatment of his charming comedy *As You Like It*.

107. **Henry Constable** was born about 1562, of a good Catholic family and was graduated at Cambridge University when he was twenty-four years old. He was suspected, on account of his religion, of a treasonable correspondence with France, and quitted England in 1595. On his return, some six years later, he was apprehended and committed to the Tower, where he was confined till towards the end of 1604. The date of Constable's death is not accurately known, but it was probably about 1613.

In 1592, he published a sonnet-sequence entitled, *Diana; or the praises of his Mistress in certaine sweete sonnets, and also some spiritual sonnets*. Constable's sonnets are occasionally sweet, but too full, as was the fashion of his time, of conceits which are ingenious rather than poetical. The following sonnet is typical of his work :—

(*Sonnet prefixed to Sidney's Apology for Poetry, 1595.*)

Give pardon, blessed soul, to my bold cries,  
If they, importuned, interrupt thy song,  
Which now with joyful notes thou sing'st among  
The angel quiristers of the heavenly skies.  
Give pardon eke, sweet soul ! to my slow cries,  
That since I saw thee now it is so long;  
And yet the tears that unto thee belong,  
To thee as yet they did not sacrifice;  
I did not know that thou wert dead before,  
I did not feel the grief I did sustain;  
The greater stroke astonisheth the more,  
Astonishment takes from us sense of pain:  
I stood amazed when others' tears begun:  
And now begin to weep when they have done.

108. **Sir John Suckling** was born at Twickenham in 1609, and committed suicide in Paris in 1642. He wrote the drama of *Aglaura* (1638); the ballad *Of a Wedding* (1640); and *Fragmenta Aurea*, all his remaining works, were published posthumously. Suckling's life, as became his wealth and station, was more that of a man of the world than of a poet. His public career was stirring and adventurous to the last degree, and yet there are songs in his *Golden Fragments* which will keep his name fresh in the hearts of all true lovers of poetry.

109. **Richard Lovelace** (1618–1658) published *Lucasta* (1649) and *Posthume Poems* (1659). Lovelace was the most careless and unequal poet of an age of such writers. He will always be remembered as the author of that noble farewell, *On Going to the Wars*, in which occur the two golden lines:

“ I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
Loved I not honor more.”

110. **William Browne (1591–1643)** wrote *Britannia's Pastoral* and *Shepherd's Pipe*. He was one of that knot of brilliant young men who called themselves the sons of Ben Jonson, and was addressed by Chapman as the learned Shepherd of Fair Hitching Hill. His pastoral poetry is sweet and natural.

111. **George Wither (1588–1667)** is generally known as the author of one charming lyric: —

“ Shall I, wasting in despaire,<sup>1</sup>  
Dye because a woman's faire?  
Or make pale my cheeks with care  
' Cause another's rosie are ? ”

It is published at the end of the first edition of *Fidelia*, a poetical epistle from a girl to her inconstant lover, but the writer of the *Shepherd's Hunting* — whose muse, according to Charles Lamb, “ is distinguished by a hearty homeliness of manner and a plain moral speaking ” — deserves to be better known. He was an intimate friend of Browne's and the two wrote in friendly rivalry. Wither's works, both in prose and poetry, are voluminous. “ The prison notes of Wither,” says the critic already quoted, in reference to *The Shepherd's Hunting*, written during the author's confinement in the Marshalsea, “ are better than the wood notes of most of his brethren.”

<sup>1</sup> Old spelling.

112. **Giles Fletcher (1588?–1623)**, cousin of one of the authors of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, wrote a religious poem of some merit, entitled, *Christ's Victory in Heaven and Earth over and after Death* (1640). It is written in the Spenserian stanza.

113. **Richard Crashaw (1613–1649)**. Pope did not hesitate to borrow the finest passages in *Eloise and Abelard* from Crashaw, and there are many lines in Crashaw's poems which unite the perfect finish of Pope to a spontaneity and poetic warmth which the Great Classic never attained. Crashaw was born in an "intellectual day," tempered by a dim religious light. His father, like Habington's, was an author, a preacher in the Temple Church, London, near which the poet was born. He took his degree at Cambridge. He entered the Anglican Church as a minister. But his views were not "orthodox;" he was expelled from his living, and soon after he became a Catholic. From his poems it is plain that Crashaw was always a Catholic at heart. He went into the Church as one who, having lived in a half-forgotten place in dreams, enters it without surprise. Crashaw went to Court, but gained no preferment. The "not impossible she" he speaks of in *Wishes*, whose courtly opposites suggested the portrait, never "materialized" herself. He became a priest, and died in 1650, canon of Loretto — an office which he obtained, it is said, through the influence of the exiled Queen Henrietta Maria. Crashaw's

poems are better known than Habington's. The best known is *Wishes*, which, like Herrick's *To Daffodils*, is quoted in almost every reader, and the lovely poem beginning, —

“Lo! here a little volume but large book  
 (Fear it not, sweet,  
 It is no hypocrite),  
 Much larger in itself than in its look.’

If Richard Crashaw, a poet who, by reason of his entire devotion to his faith and his absolute purity, belongs to this group, had written nothing except the finale of *The Flaming Heart*, he would deserve more fame than at present distinguishes his name. *The Flaming Heart*, marred as it is by those exasperating conceits that Crashaw never seemed tired of indulging in, is full of the intense fervor which the subject, “The picture of the seraphical St. Teresa, as she is usually expressed with seraphim beside her,” would naturally suggest to a religious and poetic mind. Very justly this poem beautifully closes : —

“O thou undaunted daughter of desires!  
 By all thy dower of lights and fires;  
 By all the eagle in thee, all the dove;  
 By all thy lives and deaths of love;  
 By thy large draughts of intellectual day,  
 And by thy thirsts of love more large than they;  
 By all thy brim-fill'd bowls of fierce desire,  
 By thy last morning's draught of liquid fire,  
 By the full kingdom of that final kiss



That seized thy parting soul and sealed thee His ;  
 By all the Heav'n thou hast in Him,  
 (Fair sister of the seraphim !)  
 By all of Him we have in thee,  
 Leave nothing of myself in me.  
 Let me so read thy life that I  
 Unto all life of mine may die."

114. **William Habington (1605–1654)** is remembered only by his poem to the lady whom he has sung under the fanciful name of *Castara*. Habington was a devout Catholic, and his poems are filled with the spirit of purity. His description of *Castara* is exquisite :—

“ Like the violet which alone  
 Prospers in some happy shade,  
 My *Castara* lives unknown  
 To no looser eye betrayed ;  
 For she's to herself untrue  
 Who delights i' the public view.

“ Such is her beauty, as no arts  
 Have enriched with borrowed grace,  
 Her high birth no pride imparts,  
 For she blushes in her place.  
 Folly boasts a glorious blood ;  
 She is noblest being good.”

Tranquil, serene, surrounded by his children and supported by a firm faith, of which *The Holy Man*, the fourth part of *Castara*, is an evidence, he ended a happy and peaceful life in 1654.

## CHAPTER X

*Milton and Dryden. From 1608 to 1700.*

115. **John Milton (1608–1674)** is the one English poet who may be compared with the greatest of all epic poets, Dante. He is less than Dante, because he is not so true as Dante; he does not take advantage of the full glory of Christian doctrine and tradition in *Paradise Lost*; he shows more sympathy with Satan than with St. Michael; and his epic lacks the human interest and feeling found in the *Divina Commedia* of Dante. Milton felt that he was a poet, and he consciously looked about for a great subject. Shakspeare, the greatest of all dramatic poets, had written from his heart, “warbled his wood-notes wild;” he probably chose the dramatic form without much reflection. But Milton, full of sublime thoughts, resolved to take the epic form and measure himself with Homer, Virgil, and Dante.

Milton looked for a subject on which he could embroider his grand images. Like the Saxon poet Cædmon, the client of St. Hilda, he chose the story

of the Fall of Man, as related in Genesis. This he called *Paradise Lost*. His *Paradise Regained*, a pendant to the first poem, is powerful, but it has less interest and its diction is not so noble as the epic on which his fame rests.

If Milton had never written *Paradise Lost* he would be illustrious for having produced two of the finest odes in our language, *L'Allegro* (The Cheerful Man), and *Il Penseroso* (The Thoughtful Man).

116. **John Milton** was born in Bread Street, London, December 9, 1608. He was instructed at St. Paul's School and Christ's College, Cambridge. He was intended by his family for the Anglican Church. He had, however, imbibed prejudices against the divine right of kings, then upheld by the English Church. He went into retirement at his father's country residence, Horton, in the county of Bucks. Here he devoted himself to hard study, as a preparation for the great task he proposed to undertake; he had resolved to be a poet of the first order. He held his vocation sacred; he knew that a poet, even of the highest genius, must study hard to make himself worthy of God's gift.

From 1632 to 1638 he wrote *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, representing contrasted moods in a scholar's life, and *Areades*, *Comus*, and *Lyeidas*. The first two were written before the poet's journey to Italy, when he had only begun to study the

Italian language. In 1638-'39, he went to Italy to complete his education; he returned hastily, to enter into politics and political and religious controversies for twenty years. He accepted the post of Latin secretary to the Commonwealth, although in 1649 his eyes began to show signs of disease. In 1652 he became blind. He thus describes his blindness:

“So thick a drop serene hath quenched their orbs,  
Or dim suffusion veiled.”

From these lines, it would appear that the poet did not know the cause of his blindness. It might have been, as Professor Mark Pattison says, either amaurosis (drop serene), or cataract (suffusion).

He began *Paradise Lost* in 1657. During the twenty years' interval he wrote some sonnets, which Wordsworth characterizes as —

“Soul-animating strains, alas, too few !”

They were political or personal. One of his sonnets, written on his blindness at the age of fifty, ends with the famous line, so full of music and resignation: —

“They also serve who only stand and wait.”

117. **Samson Agonistes** is taken from the Scriptural account of the great slayer of the Philistines. It was Milton's last great poem. It is imitated from the Greek drama with choruses. Milton, the unconquered but defeated Puritan, doubtless saw in Samson an image of himself. *Paradise Regained* is

in a more dramatic form than *Paradise Lost*; the dramatic form of the Elizabethan time still lingers in it. It is the story of our Lord, told from the time of his baptism. It is inferior to *Paradise Lost*. In *Paradise Lost* — separated by twenty years from the delightful odes, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Lycidas*, written on the death of a friend, and the masque of *Comus*, we find sublimity, the grandest poetic style ever written, and the most sonorous rhythm. It has only one defect. Milton did not see the full meaning and beauty of the Incarnation. He was not sufficiently Christian. Milton, like most Puritans, looked on women as inferior beings, although his description of Eve is fine; and, consequently, he could not conceive the character of her whom Wordsworth called —

“Our tainted nature’s solitary boast.”

In 1665 *Paradise Lost* was completed. The great plague and the great fire prevented its publication; it did not appear until August, 1667. It was divided into ten books at first; later, Milton cut it into twelve, by subdividing the seventh and tenth books. During 1665-’66, he wrote *Paradise Regained* and the magnificent *Samson Agonistes*. These poems appeared in 1671; he died in 1674.

118. **Milton’s Prose.** Between 1640 and 1660 Milton wrote most of his sonnets. They varied in tone, but they are nearer in form to those of Petrarca

than the sonnets of Sidney or Shakspeare. Of his pamphlets written during this time, we may mention *Areopagitica, or Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*, 1644; five pamphlets before 1642; a tract on *Education*; four pamphlets in which he advocated polygamy, or unconditional divorce. He defended the beheading of Charles I. in 1649; in Latin he wrote a *Defence of the People of England*, 1651; he answered the *Eikon Basilike*, written in sympathy with Charles, by the *Eikonoclastes*, another *Defence of the English People*, 1654, and a *Defence of Himself*, in 1655; he later published other pamphlets of a political nature. He finished *Paradise Lost* while hiding from the justly irate royalists.

119. **Milton's Life** was a stormy one; it opened serenely and religiously, as we may see from *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, and the poem *L'Allegro*, and closed in revolt and agony, as we see, too, from *Samson Agonistes*. Milton had three daughters, whom he brought up as inferior beings, fit only for household work. They were not sent to school. He taught them to read five languages, as if they were parrots, in order that he might use them as his eyes; but they did not learn the meaning of what they read. They were named Anne, Mary, and Deborah; they resisted his attempts to rule them, and he was glad to send them away from home, to learn gold and silver embroidery, as a means of

earning their living. Milton's prose is without careful form, though he studied the English language. He used in his poems about eight thousand words, while Shakspeare's vocabulary amounted to fifteen thousand.

120. **John Dryden** was born in 1631, at Aldwinckle All Saints, in the Valley of the Neu in Northamptonshire, England. He was educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge. He went to London in the year 1657. He married a daughter of the Earl of Berkshire, 1663. In 1675 he was appointed Historiographer-Royal and Poet-Laureate. Dryden has long been a neglected and misunderstood poet. Dryden's memory has been of late well defended by Mr. George Saintsbury and Mr. John Amphlett Evans, both good students. There is only one charge, which is but too well grounded; and that is the reproach of licentiousness made against the dramas of the poet. Unfortunately, he let the gross and sensual atmosphere of the Restoration influence him; he was the poet of his time; he reflected its worst and its best attributes. In his later years, he repented, like Chaucer, and in his ode to the memory of the young maid of honor to the Duchess of York, Anne Killigrew, he shows his regret and asks:—

“What can we say to excuse our second fall?”

121. **Dryden's Religion.** James II. was a Catholic; but, unhappily for the religion he professed, an un-

reasonable autocrat. Dryden had been a court favorite during the reign of his brother, and he received somewhat less favor now. About a year after the accession of James, Dryden, who had been a Puritan, and, later, an admirer of the Church of England, became a Catholic. It has been assumed that he changed his religious and political opinions for the sake of gain. It is true he had written a poem on the death of the Protector, Oliver Cromwell. Dryden was a Royalist naturally, and he was no more of a time-server than a member of the present Democratic Party would be had he written a poem in honor of the great qualities of Abraham Lincoln. Mr. George Saintsbury, the English critic, quotes the great Cardinal Newman's conversion as a parallel case. The poetry of Dryden shows conclusively that his conversion was sincere. Mr. Saintsbury compares some expressions of Cardinal Newman's with Dryden's in *The Hind and the Panther*. They show a similar condition of mind. In *The Pillar of the Cloud*, Cardinal Newman, hesitating on the threshold of the Church, says:—

“I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou  
Shouldst lead me on.  
I loved to choose and see my path, but now  
Lead Thou me on!  
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,  
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.”

In *The Hind and the Panther*, Dryden says:—



“My thoughtless youth was winged with vain desires; .  
 My manhood, long misled by wandering fires,  
 Followed false lights; and when their glimpse was gone,  
 My pride struck out new sparkles of her own.”

In April, 1687, he published *The Hind and the Panther*, the most correctly versified of his poems. In this poem, he represents as a milk-white hind the Catholic Church, persecuted, assailed, but always pure. It is in the form of a fable, not an allegory; the beasts speak. It is clear, dignified, and it has many noble passages. Among them are that on *Private Judgment*, containing the lines just quoted, and that on the unity of the Catholic Church, in which the verses occur:—

“The gospel-sound, diffused from pole to pole,  
 Where winds can carry, and where waves can roll,  
 The self-same doctrine of the sacred page  
 Conveyed to every clime, in every age.”

He had been sincere in his adhesion to the Church of England, and the *Religio Laici* (1682) is a defence of the State opinions. But even in it there are signs that his convictions were changing. If Dryden, by changing his religion, pleased the king, he knew well that he displeased the great majority of the English people. He addressed courtly compliments to the Stuarts. It was a time of panegyrics, as well as of satire; and Dryden excelled in both.

122. **Absalom and Achitophel (1681)** was the political satire by which Dryden became famous. It is

a masterly satire; the Duke of Monmouth is Absalom, and Lord Shaftesbury, Achitophel. Dryden is not a courtier in this; if he were, the poem would have been powerless with the English people; he was a politician and patriot. He was more of a partisan at all times than a courtier; his anti-Dutch drama, *Amboyna*, was written when William of Orange, a Dutchman, sat on the throne of England.

123. **The form of Dryden's poems** is very correct. He succeeded in giving dignity to the rhyming couplet. Used by Pope, it is more jingling and artificial. Dryden's odes are as great as Milton's. Compare Milton's *Ode on the Nativity* with Dryden's *On St. Cecilia's Day*, or Milton's *Lycidas* with Dryden's *Anne Killigrew*, or Milton's *L'Allegro* with Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*. The *Annus Mirabilis*, a patriotic picture of England's glories and of the great fire in London, appeared in 1667. *The Medal* and *MacFlecknoe* were political satires, succeeding *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681). In his latter years he, retired from court and deprived of his honors, made many translations. His fine paraphrase — he was more of a paraphraser than a translator — of the *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, is in every hymn-book. He published his translation of Virgil in 1697. Among his prose works is a translation of Bonhour's *Life of St. Francis Xavier*. His defence of Poetry, which Thomas Arnold has admirably annotated, is excellent, though he fails to see as much beauty as

there is in his models, the dramas of French writers. In 1664 Dryden wrote *The Indian Queen*, a tragedy, and shortly afterwards, *The Indian Emperor*. In *All for Love*, he dropped the rhyming couplet, and used blank verse entirely. It is the best of his tragedies. James Russell Lowell calls it "a noble play." In *The Spanish Friar*, a very low comedy, *Aurengzebe*, *The Rival Ladies*, *Don Sebastian*, *The Royal Martyr*, and *The Siege of Granada*, he mingles the rhymed couplet with blank verse. *The Siege of Granada*, which is so long that it could not be played at one representation, is an epic rather than a drama. It has not yet received at the hands of English critics the praise it deserves. John Dryden died at his house in Gerard Street, Soho, London, on May 1, 1700; he was buried with great pomp in Westminster Abbey. His poems are full of brilliant lines:—

"A Greek, and bountiful, forewarns us twice."

"Forgiveness to the injured does belong,  
But they ne'er pardon who have done the wrong."

"The cause of love can never be assigned,  
'T is in no face, but in the lover's mind."

"Men are but children of a larger growth,  
Our appetites as apt to change as theirs."

## CHAPTER XI

*The Augustan Age.—Alexander Pope and his Time.*  
— *The beginning of Modern English His-*  
*tory.— 1688—1744.*

124. **The short reign of Queen Anne** is rich in great names — as rich almost as the reigns of Elizabeth and Victoria. If the reign of Elizabeth gave us Shakspeare, and that of Victoria, Tennyson, the reign of Queen Anne is a veritable Augustan epoch of literary giants. The actual reign of this queen extended from 1702 to 1714 — twelve years. And yet in these twelve years an impetus was given to literature which seems to be out of all proportion to the character of the sovereign or of the time.

125. **When we speak of the literary period of Queen Anne**, we do not mean only the few years of her reign; we mean the whole period which was influenced especially by the great men who reached the height of their intellectual power under her reign. There had been a literary interregnum between Dryden and Pope. Milton was the poet of

the Commonwealth; Dryden, of the Restoration. After Dryden, English literature was barren until Pope arose.

126. **Of the galaxy of great names** of the time of Queen Anne, the greatest was that of Alexander Pope, who, born in 1688, came in with that new dispensation which brought a German dynasty to the throne of England and made it impossible for a Stuart to sit again on that throne. Of the men of this Augustan time, let us take four, and from their lives and their works we shall be able to get more of the color and flavor of this period of transition than from even Macaulay's graphic but untrustworthy pictures. It is a fault of the historian, Macaulay, that he sacrifices truth for effect; and the consequence is that more than one character has been damaged by him for the sake of a brilliant antithesis. It is for this reason that the value of his work has, since his death, much depreciated among scholars. How vivid, how glowing his pictures are! — how antithesis plays upon antithesis, like lightning about lightning, in his descriptions! — but the flash passes and he leaves us in darkness. Pope has suffered very much at the hands of Macaulay. The poet had his faults, but he was neither so weak, so malicious, nor so insincere as the historian has made him out to be.

127. **Pope and Dean Swift, Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson** are four men who belong to the Augustan

age of English letters, and who more than any others except Addison gave it its life and tone.

128. **Pope was born twenty-one years after Swift; Johnson, in 1709, twenty-one years after Pope, and Goldsmith in 1728. Goldsmith died in 1774, Pope in 1744, Swift in 1745, and Johnson in 1784. Pope and Swift were close friends, and one of the pleasantest passages in Dr. Johnson's life is his friendship for Goldsmith. These four, though so divided in the number of their years, were contemporaries; and, differing in the quality of their talent as one star differs from another, they all had the impress of the world of their time, which was gradually becoming the world of our time.**

129. **The Change in the Times.**—That spirit of romance and recklessness, that high regard for an artificial idea of honor and disregard for practices of morality, which seemed to mark the Stuarts as the last representatives of a lowered chivalry, had passed away. The English throne had been lost to the male Stuarts and to princes of the Catholic faith through Queen Anne's father, James II. Queen Anne, an ungrateful daughter, a stupid woman married to a drunken and more stupid prince, gave no promise of adding, by her encouragement, any new writer to the list of great authors, of whom Dryden was the last.

130. **After each political struggle, literature had burst into bloom in England with luxuriance. Para-**

*disc Lost* had followed the wars of the Commonwealth; *Hamlet*, the fierce political struggle which left Elizabeth throned lioness of the West; and now that a period of peace had come after the dissensions, the plots and counter-plots, the revolts and judicial murders, that had characterized the reign of James II., literature burst, as it were, into a new spring — the palm raised its tall head and the fern clustered about its root. Dryden stood alone. He may be said to have been the last of the Elizabethans, for he had all their spirit — the grandeur, the fire, and, unhappily, the freedom of expression of the Renaissance; he was of a new order, yet of the old. He had exchanged the doubt which weakened the writings of his contemporaries for the certitude which the Catholic Church offers. Doubt, philosophical and religious, had, since the time of Henry VIII., been gradually growing in English literature. It is a mistake to imagine that infidelity was born in France; Voltaire took more from Bolingbroke than Bolingbroke and the English took from Voltaire; it was in England that Voltaire gained the ammunition he afterwards used with such fatal effect.

131. **Pope's faults and virtues** were much accentuated by his early training. His father and mother were Catholics, and therefore he was debarred from receiving an education at any college or university in England. To be a Catholic in 1688, in England, was to be, in the eyes of the law, a criminal. Cath-

olics were doubly taxed, they could exercise their religion only by stealth; they could not own land in their own names. Thanks to the friendliness and honesty of some of their Protestant neighbors, many of them held land in the names of those neighbors. All avenues of ambition were closed to Catholics; their only hope was in going abroad, in entering some great foreign college or some foreign army,—in becoming exiles from their own land and citizens of another. The Irish nobles and gentry who had remained faithful to the tyrannical and weak James Stuart to the last, expatriated themselves in this way after the battle of the Boyne; hence we find a MacMahon famous in the annals of France, an O'Donnell in Spain, a Taafe in Austria, and many Irish and some English names high in the service of Continental states. But Pope's father was not a nobleman or a soldier; he was a linen draper, and, after the Revolution by which William of Orange and James Stuart's daughter came to the throne of England, Pope's father retired from business and went to Binfield to live. Binfield was not far from Windsor and was one of the prettiest spots in England. Here his parents lived, in the strictest seclusion, for twenty-seven years.

Alexander was an only child, and he was over-indulged. He went to a small school at Tayford and to one at London, as he was, because of his religion, kept out of the great public schools. His saddest



loss was that of a systematic education. At the age of twelve, he left school ; he was delicate in health, small, and he had curvature of the spine.

132. **Pope lacked a Philosophical Education.**— Alexander Pope needed, in his time, when the jar of beliefs, philosophies, and opinions was becoming loudest, a careful philosophical training : but he did not get it ; he was allowed to read what he pleased, and he read at random, rejecting what he disliked, assimilating what pleased him. He was like a bee in a garden full of flowers, among which there are many that are poisonous. Some of the poison showed itself in the honey of the poet ; and it is to his lack of true philosophical training, and to his reading without discretion that are due heresies in his *Essay on Man* and other blemishes in his poems. Pope, in the *Essay on Man*, adopted the false principles of Bolingbroke without thinking much about them. In consequence, to Pope's horror, Voltaire, the arch-infidel, loudly praised the poem and it widely circulated in France. Pope was made to appear as an infidel in spite of himself. He was not a scholar ; he could neither read nor speak French well ; he knew less Greek probably than Shakspeare, and his knowledge of Latin was by no means critical.

133. **English History** has not the name of any man who ascended to such dazzling heights against such terrible obstacles as did Alexander Pope, except one in more modern times,— Benjamin Disraeli, Lord

Beaconsfield. Pope, in his day, had, as a Catholic, hindrances similar to those which opposed Disraeli, the Jew. He met them, and almost deserved the proud laudation he gives himself, when he says that, "if he pleased, he pleased by manly ways."

The Popes, although much secluded, had some friends who lived not far from them; these were the Blounts of Mapledurham, a Catholic family. The two daughters, Teresa and Martha, had an important influence on the poet's life. An early friend of his was William Walsh, a writer of verses, whose advice to Pope was admirable: "There have been great poets in England, but never one great poet that was correct." The young poet took these words to heart, and the English language can boast of no poet, except Tennyson, to whom it owes more polished lines. Pope's correctness is half his value.

When Pope was very young his eyes saw rapturously the old poet Dryden at the famous Will's coffee-house in London. Dryden was then a "burly figure," with a red, wrinkled face, long gray hair, and a waistcoat powdered with snuff. Pope was a worshipper of great literary men. If he could not be near the rose himself, he was willing to revere one who had been near the rose. Wycherley, a celebrated writer of comedies, now grown old, became friendly with the precocious lad. Pope's father and mother, strict Catholics as they were, must have been

indeed over-indulgent, to permit this intimacy, for Wycherley was one of the most brutally indecent writers of the Restoration Period. It may be that from Wycherley and the rakish London circle of wits to whose company he introduced Pope, he acquired a cynical manner of speaking of women. If we look into our hearts and ask why Pope, with all his genius, with all his keenness, with all his common-sense, with all his power of putting the most elegant and buoyant and finished shafts to the arrows of truth, does not get nearer to them, we shall discover that his lack of chivalry, and his powerlessness to appreciate true womanhood gives the answer.

134. **Pope and the Society of his Time.**—Pope reflected the spirit of the society in which he lived when he left his parents' quiet home and went to London. He was a poet of common-sense, of judgment, of fine art, of keen wit, of brilliant antithesis, but never of heroism, of high duty, or of nobility of action. He purified poetry from the licentiousness of the Restoration Period; he made the inflated and bombastic conceits of that time impossible; he was the poet of the drawing-room, not of the woods,—a retailer of the clever sayings of the assembly, not an echo of the mysterious voice of God in nature.

A glimpse of Pope's time will tell us something of the circumstances that helped to move the man. It was a time of political intrigue. Queen Anne, at

St. James' in London, was the sister of the Pretender, who had fled to France. Who would succeed her? The Catholic prince at the Court of King Louis, or the Protestant William of Orange? The nobles intrigued with both; and Pope caught this spirit of intrigue. It was in the air. He could do nothing in a straightforward way; he plotted when plots were foolish; his vanity led him into the most silly subterfuges for increasing his own importance and keeping himself before the eyes of the public. He quarrelled with nearly all his friends, and yet he was doubtless loved by one of them, Dean Swift, the most sarcastic, the most cynical of men, until the end. Pope was spiteful; it must be admitted that he did not hesitate to equivocate in an unmanly fashion to gain a literary object; he was furious at times against the enemies who lampooned and ridiculed him. But let us remember how malicious, how bitter these enemies were, that he was of an irritably nervous organization, and that he was never quite well. A man with curvature of the spine may be excused if he show ill temper at times. And in attacking the vulgar tribe of literary mud-flingers about him, he, we regret, got more of his own mud in return than of theirs; he lowered himself by meeting malice with malice. And yet, though Pope quarrelled with nearly all his friends, generally from some petty motive, he was loved by those who knew him best. Vain and vindictive as he appears, he

must have had a good heart. When Teresa Blount, one of the two sisters who had been his early friends, offended him, he, nevertheless, saved her from the pressure of poverty. He sneered at those who sneered at him; he lived to be famous; he cultivated his reputation as a gardener might cultivate a splendid flower, and he was not scrupulous as to the means he employed in so doing. To speak plainly, he did not tell the truth at times and he pretended what he did not feel.

135. **Pope's crippled condition.**—He was a sickly cripple, socially — being the son of a tradesman — inferior to those around him; he used the arms of the weak against the strong. As Matthew Arnold says: —

“ For each day brings its petty dust,  
Our soon-choked souls to fill,  
And we forget because we must,  
And not because we will.”

But poor Pope had not that blessed gift of forgetting, which so marvellously helps us to forgive. He loved his father and mother devotedly; he assisted men and women who were poor; he clung to his friend Bolingbroke, in spite of his disgrace; he helped Dr. Johnson to the utmost of his power,— a friendliness which the latter afterwards transferred to Goldsmith. His devotion to his father and mother was intense; the latter lived the longer. Alluding to her he writes: —

“She let the tender office long engage,  
To rock the cradle of declining age,  
With lenient acts extend a mother’s breath,  
Make languor smile, and smooth the bed of death,  
Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,  
And keep awhile one parent from the sky.”

Pope wrote this from his heart. The only fault that can be found with it is its monotony — the rhymes make it jingle too gaily. How much more dignified would this be in a measure without rhyme, or in one in which the rhyme was not so closely recurrent.

136. **One of the most dignified** letters of Pope’s is that written to Atterbury, in which he refuses to change his religion for the sake of temporal advantages. Pope’s faith during his life was not of the militant order; he believed, but he was not particularly zealous. He lived in a social world in which convictions were not fashionable,— a world of blue china, and assemblies, and high play at cards, and witty sayings, and low bows, and graceful courtesies, — in which the set of the patches on a lady’s face and the texture of the lace ruffles a man wore at his wrists were more important than faith or morals. It was an age of politeness, of manners, of artificiality. To understand it, one must read the letters of Lord Chesterfield. It is to Pope’s credit that he preserved his love for his parents, his love for the Abbé Southcote and earlier friends. Pope gives us a

glimpse of the manners of his age in that charmingly lyrical bit of light verse, *The Rape of the Lock*. Lord Petre, one of the aristocratic circle of Catholic families in which Pope had friends, had been one of a water party on the Thames. Among the ladies was Miss Arabella Fermor, who was noted for the beauty of her hair. Lord Petre cuts off a lock, just as Belinda (Miss Fermor) is bending over her coffee. Pope, in an exaggerated tone, says :—

“Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes,  
And screams of horror rend th’ affrighted skies.  
Not louder shrieks to pitying Heaven are cast,  
When husbands, or when lap-dogs, breathe their last;  
Or when rich China vessels fall’n from high,  
In glitt’ring dust and painted fragments lie!”

Lord Petre’s impudence brought about a quarrel among the families ; and a friend of theirs proposed that Pope should treat the subject in an airy fashion, and thus help to bring about a reconciliation. The Belinda of the poem was of course Miss Fermor ; the Baron, Lord Petre ; Thalestris is Mrs. Morley ; Sir Plume is Mrs. Morley’s brother, Sir George Brown of Haddington. Miss Fermor was much offended by the cynical and condescending manner which Pope assumed in the poem towards her and all women, and everybody concerned was more indignant than before. Nevertheless, it is one of the most brilliant of that light form of poetry which we call “society verses.”

137. **The tone of the Augustan age** towards women, as shown in the essayists and poets influenced by it, was sneering and satirical. Even the elegant Addison seems to look on women as pretty toys — fit only to paste a black patch over a dimple, to put a touch of rouge on their cheeks, and to use a fan with all the graceful artificiality which the politeness of the time had elevated into an art. Dean Swift was brutal in his treatment of women, and Dr. Johnson admired their prettiness in a lordly way. Goldsmith alone, of these four, understood them and wrote of them with a respectful reverence that was almost awe.

138. **The fashionable London lady** of Pope's and Swift's, of Goldsmith's and Johnson's time was not a serious person. To see the simple and gracious woman, one would have had to seek the country places. Thackeray, in *The Virginians*, gives us opportunities of understanding this. The lady of Pope's time arose at twelve o'clock. At one her morning toilet was probably completed. Her maid touched her cheeks and lips with red, put a patch just where it would help to increase the brilliancy of her eyes or the plumpness of her cheek, and brought her a cup of chocolate. Then she probably saw her dressmaker or considered her engagements for the day.

About one o'clock, the promenade in the Park began. A young man — and some old ones — who had spent the night in card-playing at one of the



fashionable coffee-houses, appeared in a full white wig, with a cocked hat edged with silver carried under his left arm, and his sword ornamented with a knot of ribbon of the favorite color of the lady he happened to be in love with. He wore a handkerchief of the finest Flemish lace about his throat; his waistcoat was left open at the top, showing a ruffled shirt, and from a buttonhole in his coat fell his muff, usually of fox-skin. Let us imagine the young Lord Petre coming out of Pall Mall to the Park about half-past one o'clock in the day. His wig is very high, and elaborately powdered, his silver-bordered flat hat is carried under his left arm, his cane, tied to his wrist by a ribbon, "trails harmoniously on the pebbles," he carries his fringed gloves in his left hand, and an elaborate snuff-box, painted with the head of some Tory politician or perhaps some reigning "toast," as the "professional beauty" was then called. He wears a silver-embroidered white brocade coat, with a waistcoat of some more brilliant color: his delicate lace cravat is, according to the fashion, softly powdered with snuff; the tails of his coat, lined with tender-colored azure or puce silk, — puce was the color known to-day as heliotrope, — are stiffened with wire. He lounges along until he reaches a pond in the Park, where ducks are swimming. He stops there, feeding the fowl, and making, in his own estimation, a very pretty picture, while the ladies pass and admire him — that is, those who are not too much

engrossed in admiring themselves. He is particularly proud of the silver-embroidered stockings which match his suit, and of the high red heels of his shoes.

139. **The fashionable life of Pope's time.**—The lady when, after her chocolate, she appeared in public, was fearfully and wonderfully made. A hoop distended her skirts, which were of satin, velvet, or some other rich material, brocaded in bunches of gold and silver flowers; she wore long, stiff, tightly laced bodices, with large panniers on either side; her hair—very little of it her own—towered a foot at least above her head, so that it was difficult to get into a sedan chair. When she was in, the bearers of this fashionable conveyance took hold of the shafts, threw the harness over their shoulders, and trotted with their fair burden towards the Park or the assembly. Carried in their chairs or drawn in their carriages, they trifled away time, varying their lounge in the Park with a visit to a jeweller's or bric-à-brac shops. They dined at four o'clock. After this they went to an afternoon "tea" and then to the Italian opera or the theatre. Later, they had supper; after supper they gambled, for card-playing was the passion of the age; fortunes were lost and won; and men and women vied with one another in devotion to various games of chance. There were assemblies, too, where the stately minuet was danced and the contradances, one of which survives in our Virginia reel, known in England as the Sir Roger de Coverley. Conversation

was an art brought to the highest perfection, and much of Pope's most brilliant verse is simply the talk of his time. When he was at his best, he was above his age; when at his worst, he reflected its spirit.

140. The time was "out of joint." — It was a miserable time. The stupid Queen, alternately ruled by her waiting-maid and by the arrogant Duchess of Marlborough, gave no elevated example. The English Church was a political machine; there were fox-hunting parsons, drinking parsons, gambling parsons, but few who cared for the souls of their people. Parishes were given to men of irregular lives then, just as politicians divide places now. St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, was an open infidel; most of the men around him were unbelievers at least. Treachery in politics was a virtue; if a man or woman were fashionable or clever, it made no difference whether he were good or not.

The ladies of the time of Queen Mary and the Georges thought more of an apt speech, a cutting repartee, or the skilful management of the fan (you remember Addison's fan drill in *The Spectator*) than of goodness. Perhaps this is the reason why Pope's women are all coquettes, with nothing of the Portia or Cordelia in them. In a pointed line he says: —

"Most women have no character at all."

and again: —

"But every woman is at heart a rake."

141. A “Wit” in Pope’s time meant a scholar; and a rake an extravagant man, given to reckless pleasure; Pope meant that every woman, though she could not gamble and drink as the rakes of the town did, was in sympathy with them.

142. Pope’s early Poems. *The Pastorals* are, as Leslie Stephens says, “mere schoolboy exercises.” His poem *Windsor Forest* appeared in 1713 — a year before the death of Queen Anne; it contains pleasant descriptions, and its manner is lively. *The Temple of Fame* (1715) was a bad imitation of Chaucer; the *Eloisa to Abelard* and *The Elegy to the Memory of an unfortunate Lady* appeared in 1717. The lines in the former are very sentimental, very coarse, and very well versified. One of the epigrams in this poem has been quoted, as most of his epigrams have, a thousand times: —

“How happy is the blameless vestal’s lot,  
The world forgetting, by the world forgot.”

But how many epigrams Pope left us. They are polished and clear-cut. For instance,—

“Shoot folly as it flies.”

“The proper study of mankind is man.”

“Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest.”

“A little learning is a dangerous thing.”

“The last and greatest art — the art to blot.”

“Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw.”

“Men must be taught as if you taught them not.”

“Just as the twig is bent, the tree ’s inclined.”

“An honest man ’s the noblest work of God.”

“’T is with our judgments as our watches ; none  
Go just alike, yet each believes his own.”

143. The **Rape of the Lock** appeared in 1714 and made Pope famous. The town talked of it and admired it. The little man, who had to be sewed up in buckram every day to keep him straight, and to have a raised seat at table that he might be on a level with others, was the most flattered and sought after of all the London wits. Addison was at this time prince of writers ; he was friendly to Pope, who was to succeed him, but they quarrelled. The *Essay on Criticism* appeared in 1711 ; the poet’s allusions made him enemies. Among these was a writer named Dennis, who savagely attacked Pope. The latter answered venomously by an allusion to Dennis’ poverty in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* (1735). By this time he had quarrelled with the much-praised Addison, and in this also he writes the cruelest satire of his late friend.

144. If Addison ceased to be a friend of Pope’s, Dean Swift, who had been attracted by *Windsor Forest*, became a warm admirer of his. Thackeray, in his lecture on Swift says : “ That Swift was born at No. 7 Hoey’s Court, Dublin, on the 30th of November, 1667, is a certain fact, of which nobody will deny the sister island the honor and glory ; but it seems to me he was no more an Irishman than a

man born of English parents at Calcutta is a Hindoo. Goldsmith was an Irishman, and always an Irishman; Steele was an Irishman, and always an Irishman; Swift's heart was English." He was poor and proud, well educated at Trinity College, Dublin, where, later, Edmund Burke and Goldsmith studied at the same time, and where their statues now stand. He became secretary to Sir William Temple — a sort of lackey, with twenty pounds a year — and here he served in anguish of heart, sitting at the servants' table, with the pride of Lucifer. He became a clergyman of the Church of England, not for love of religion, but for love of preferment; he was ambitious; he confesses that he works only that he may become rich and great. He wanted to be a bishop, but he became only a dean. We see him a brutal man of genius, hating his race, causing two women to love him, and at last marrying Stella and leaving Vanessa to die of a broken heart. There are lines in Swift which no decent man would read, or, if by chance he read them, not strive to forget them. His *Gulliver's Travels*, written out of hatred for mankind, has become a children's book — strange metamorphosis. At last, after bitter tortures of heart, after enduring slights which fell to the lot of only a poor chaplain in those days, he intrigued his way to what the world called greatness. Then he did his best for Pope. We find a contemporary picture of his swelling through the

crowd at court, a personage of immense importance, and knowing it well. He turns from a great lord to a poor hanger-on, only to show his independence. He tells a young nobleman that the best poet in England is Mr. Pope, "a Papist," who has begun a translation of Homer into English, for which he wanted subscriptions; "for," he said, "he shall not begin to print until I have a thousand guineas for him." Thackeray says of the Dean's kindness: "I think I would rather have had a potato and a friendly word from Goldsmith than have been beholden to the Dean for a guinea and a dinner. He insulted a man as he served him, made women cry, guests look foolish, bullied unlucky friends, and flung his benefactions into poor men's faces. No! the Dean was no Irishman — no Irishman ever gave but with a kind word and a true heart."

145. **Pope loved this irreligious clergyman,** — why, we cannot understand. "His eyes are azure as the heavens and have a charming archness in them," Pope says. And yet this arch and azure-eyed person raged at all we hold dear. How sweetly he jokes about eating little children. "I have been assured," he writes, in his *Modest Proposal*, "by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child, well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled." The blighting frost of his wit played over all things that

most of us hold sacred. No wonder that he lived a wretched life, and died raving mad. He knew death was coming, and he knew, too, that only three friends would grieve for him — and the truest of these was Pope. He says:—

“Poor Pope will grieve a month, and Gay  
 A week, and Arbuthnot a day;  
 St. John himself will scarce forbear  
 To bite his pen and drop a tear;  
 The rest will give a shrug and cry,  
 'Tis pity — but we all must die.”

Pope's translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* made him a rich man; he gained from them £9000 — and as money was then worth twice its present value we may place his profits at one hundred thousand dollars at least. Strange as it may seem, Pope translated Homer without much Greek, and with only a very little of Latin. He simply used former translations, put them into his own language, and he produced some noble passages. But Pope's Homer is not Homer's Homer. *The Odyssey* was published in 1725, and then Pope wrote *The Dunciad*, a stinging satire on his enemies. As an exercise in the couplet, it is a marvellous work of art; it is invaluable, too, to the student of contemporary history; but, as Taine says, “Seldom has so much talent been expended to produce so much weariness.” Henceforth Pope mixed morality and personal reflections. During ten years he wrote:



*Moral Essays, Essay on Man, Imitations of Homer, Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, and the Epilogue to the Satires.* Pope excuses the sting of his satire by one more stinging:—

“You think this cruel? Take this for a rule,  
No creature smarts so little as a fool.”

146. **Toward the end of his life** this bitter poet grew gentler. With the Spanish king, who was asked if he forgave his enemies, Pope might have answered, “Certainly—I have killed them all.” He spent the last years at his pleasant villa at Twickenham; and there he died, on May 30, 1744. In his last hour he turned towards the God whom his father and mother had taught him to adore. He fervently received the last sacraments. He was buried beside the parents he had so tenderly loved, and there he lies—the bitterness burned out, the malice gone.

## CHAPTER XII

*The Augustan Age. — Oliver Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson*

147. You have read of the fauns of the Pagan mythology — those strange creatures who loved the sunlight and the woods, who were not quite men, and not quite animals, but who were harmless and playful, and sometimes grotesque. Oliver Goldsmith had something of the faun in his composition. He loved all the sights and sounds of nature; he loved to wander among the rural poor, to play the flute while they danced on the village green, and he was happiest among the least artificial forms of life. In this he offers a striking contrast to Pope, who preceded him in the line of poetic descent from Dryden. Pope, as you know, loved the atmosphere of the assembly and the coffee-house; the glaze of blue china was pleasanter to his sight than the azure of the sky, and the rustle of a lady's court-train at a rout, or the trailing of a gentleman's cane over the stones of Pall Mall, sweeter than country sounds to his hearing. But Goldsmith was genuine; he had no love for the artificiality of his time. Pope was

born forty years before Goldsmith, and yet, when Goldsmith went to London, the manners and customs of the English upper classes had changed very little. The English form of government had ceased to be what it had been, but English social life was not materially different from English life in the days of Pope.

148. **The Manners of Goldsmith's Times.** — People amused themselves very much, and at the same time their manners were more formal than ours are now. And yet, with all their formality, they were more coarse. The English did not become civilized until a later period than the Continental peoples, and their manners were almost as coarse under the first Georges as they were under Elizabeth. No gentlewoman in our time could listen to the language of Queen Elizabeth without a blush; and we are told by a good authority, the Duchess of Feria, that Queen Mary, her sister, was the marvel of the Court because her speech was so pure. The king, Henry VIII., did not believe this possible until he had sent some one to test the truth of it! Similarly, the license of speech permitted in the days of Pope and Swift would have shocked any decent man in our time. And we may be grateful to the best of the English poets that they were purer than their age. The men who reflected the corruption of manners are dead to us; the poets who were pure, live.

149. **No English writer will live longer in the**

hearts of men than Oliver Goldsmith, "Noll," as he was sometimes called,— "Goldy," as the great Dr. Johnson liked to call him. "He had the Celtic generosity, with the Celtic recklessness — he never refused to lend money when he had it, and he died owing ten thousand dollars. All beggars loved him and all borrowers clung to him; he would find a home for the homeless, and give his last crust of bread to the hungry, with a benediction. Reduced to poverty one day, he would the next, when some funds came to him, buy an expensive velvet suit — he was particularly fond of plum color. He was constantly getting money, before he became an author, from his kind uncle Contarine, and spending it as rapidly and as foolishly as he got it. While at Leyden, in Holland, presumably completing his medical studies, he was induced to play cards, after having made a resolution never to do so. He lost all his money and was obliged to borrow some. He was alone in a strange land with perhaps two guineas in his pocket. Leyden was rich in flower-gardens crowded with tulips, then as precious as orchids are now. He remembered that his uncle Contarine was fond of flowers, and he spent half his money for a high-priced bulb to send to him. He had the fatal Irish objection to saying "No," and the lovely Irish virtue of generosity, which, however, in forgetting to be just to itself, is often unjust to others.

150. **Oliver Goldsmith unlike Dean Swift.** — Oliver Goldsmith, though of English descent, was more Irish than the Irish themselves. He came of a family of clergymen of the Church of England, and his father seems to have expected in a vague kind of way that he would become a clergyman too. He must have been a queer little fellow. There is a story — which William Black, in his sketch of Goldsmith, discredits — showing that he was a very clever child. He was uncouth, very small, pitted with the small-pox. He was called “a stupid, heavy blockhead,” and perhaps he deserved that title! But the story runs that once when he was gambolling at a dancing party at his uncle’s house, the fiddler, struck by the almost dwarfish look of the boy, cried out “Æsop,” and, quick as thought, the awkward boy replied: —

“Our herald hath proclaimed this saying,  
See Æsop dancing and his monkey playing.”

Later in life, Goldsmith had no power of repartee. The most brutal ignoramus, whose retort in society was nothing but a horse-laugh, could put him to shame. He was sensitive, and, like other sensitive people, he was anxious for the good opinion of those around him. Put a pen in his hand and he could talk as charmingly as the most brilliant conversationalist of the salon of Madame de Rambouillet; but, in society, he thought of all the good things he might

have said when the opportunity for saying them was gone.

151. **Goldsmith's work**, like that of most authors, is autobiographical. One can discover very easily the qualities of the man and his experience in his poems, his plays, his great novel. Goldsmith was born at Pallas, in the county of Longford, on November 10, 1728. Here his father was "passing rich on forty pounds a year." About two years later Mr. Goldsmith moved to Lissoy, in the county of Westmeath. In Lissoy is recognized the Auburn of *The Deserted Village*. Macaulay protests against this identification. The historian presumes that no smiling Irish village, such as that described as Auburn, could, in a short time, be turned into a desert place by evictions — in fact, he insinuates that there never have been pleasant and flourishing villages in Ireland. We must look on this as cool judgment has led us to look on a great many of Macaulay's brilliant hypotheses. Goldsmith idealized Lissoy; but there can be no doubt that this beloved place was the original of Auburn. Macaulay might as well have said that Longfellow's picture of the forced emigration of the Acadians was false or overdrawn. Lissoy might not have in all respects been the Auburn of *The Deserted Village*; we must allow for that glamour which affectionate remembrance casts over the scenes of childhood.

152. **Goldsmith's school-life** was not serene. He

was the butt of his companions ; he was not strong enough to answer their blows with blows ; he was not clever enough to retaliate with his tongue. His life at home must have been cheerful, for no man who had not a cheerful home could have painted such an interior as that of the Vicar's house. The clergyman in the *Vicar of Wakefield* was drawn from his father, — a simple, kind-hearted, gentle old man, ready to sacrifice everything for his children ; and the blundering Moses had some of the qualities of Goldsmith himself.

A clergyman with forty pounds a year, even when money was worth twice what it is now, was not rich. Goldsmith's father had somewhat more than this at Lissoy ; but he was far from being well off, and, when he died, he left almost nothing. Oliver had been sent to Trinity College. He went as a sizar, — that is, he was given his education on condition of performing certain menial duties. He did not like this ; he complained that he had to sleep in a garret ; and on a window pane in this garret his name may still be seen.

His uncle tried to console him with the information that he had been a sizar in his time ; some of the most eminent men in Great Britain had earned their education in this way. If he could pass through Trinity College with credit, his success, provided he should use ordinary industry and prudence, was assured. Nothing was required of him, except

that he should endure certain minor hardships and, in return, receive the best equipment his country could give him.

153. **Goldsmith's Weakness a Lesson to Youth.** — But Goldsmith, whose genius might have conquered all difficulties, refused to conquer himself. This was his fatal misfortune. Had he had the prudence and perseverance of Pope, he might have lived comfortably, died at least serenely, and left even greater evidences of his genius than we have. Reason was little to him, inclination everything. At the age of twenty-one, after several escapades, he took his degree, lowest on the list. The world was before him. Poor as he was, he had enjoyed advantages that are better than riches, — advantages which, had his father been the richest man in Great Britain, were all he could have bestowed on his son. Up to the age of twenty-one, he had been asked to do nothing but improve his mind. In spite of his love of aimless wandering and his hatred of control, he had learned how to study; and, later in life, he was forced to be industrious, for steadily increasing debts, the results of thoughtless extravagance, dogged him to death. He started in the world sensitive, generous, reckless, timid, and yet capable of assuming the most audacious self-sufficiency, in order to conceal his natural shyness. Once on his way from school, with only one guinea in his pocket, he felt very proud indeed. He resolved to make the best



of the golden coin, which, as was always the case with him, seemed to hold indefinite capacities for pleasure until it was gone. He determined to stop at the best house in a village which he entered as night came on; he inquired for the inn in a most condescending way, and a wag sent him to the squire's house. The squire humored the joke, and the youthful spendthrift, thinking of the vast resources of the guinea still unspent in his pocket, ordered the servants about in a mighty manner and patronizingly asked the host and his wife to have a bottle of wine with him. On this episode he based his charming comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*. Tony Lumpkin, the good-natured and uncouth country boy, in this comedy — or perhaps we may call it, as we call Shakspeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, a farce — is too stupid to be a picture of Goldsmith himself, but Tony has some of Noll's propensities highly developed. This is one of the most delightful comedies ever written in any language. It has the fine humor of Molière and a vivacity of diction that is more French than English.

He preferred idleness to work, and a happy-go-lucky existence in an Irish village to the unknown opportunities of the great world. His relatives more than hinted that he ought to choose a profession. He tried to enter the English Church, which at this time was a refuge for many singular people, as one may see by perusing the various chronicles of the

time and Thackeray's *Virginians*. It seems that Goldsmith, with his usual fondness for gay attire, clothed himself in scarlet, and the Bishop of Elphin would not permit him to be examined. He became a tutor, through the influence of the long-suffering uncle Contarine; he started, bedewed with the tears of his mother, and no doubt followed by the thanksgivings of all his other relatives, to Cork, to embark for America. But he spent his money and came back, telling a story of having been robbed, — a story so improbable, that nobody, except his mother and uncle Contarine, could have been foolish enough to believe it. The kind uncle gave him fifty guineas more, and he started for Dublin to study law. He was back again, penniless, in a short time. Uncle Contarine gave him another chance; he was sent to Edinburgh to study medicine, and he went away, never to return to Ireland again. But in his dreams he was often there; when he wrote his immortal poem, *The Deserted Village*, her greenness was always before his eyes; all the flaming tulips of Holland, all the heavy-headed roses of France, all the exotics of London, were as nothing to him compared with the dew-besprent shamrocks of his native fields. At the Italian Opera, when a great singer warbled — and Goldsmith was an intelligent amateur of music — he closed his eyes and went back to Lissoy, longing in his heart for the old, familiar airs. The youth in search of for-

tune did not remain long in Edinburgh. Of course he wanted more money that he might pursue his studies in medicine on the Continent, where there were great professors. He went to Holland, and drew money from the credulous uncle Contarine, until at last even his almost exhaustless patience ceased to be a virtue.

154. **From 1755 to 1756** he travelled in Europe, and wrote elaborate letters to his uncle Contarine, — letters which are not too refined to omit a reference to the financial needs of the author. How he travelled, nobody knows. There is a rumor that he played the flute to admiring peasants and at the doors of convents, but as this has a tinge of romance, it was probably invented by himself; William Black says that he begged his way — at any rate, he returned with a doctor's degree and nothing else to speak of.

155. **He still idles.**—A cloud covered Goldsmith at this period. There was no more money from uncle Contarine. He had no friends in London; his pitted and ugly face was against him; his Lissoy brogue was against him; he did not know which way to turn; he seemed to have failed utterly and through his own fault. Still, he was cheerful and generous, even with his crusts. He found a place as tutor in a school, and, later, as a hack writer for a publisher called Griffiths. He quarrelled with Griffiths; and we find him at the age of thirty, already in debt for

a new suit of clothes, and with no place among the world's workers.

156. **His first literary work** was an attack on the critics, in the *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe*; his second, a magazine called *The Bee*, to which he was the sole contributor. "There is not," he said, in his first short essay in this periodical, "perhaps a more whimsically dismal figure in Nature than a man of real modesty, who assumes an air of impudence, who, while his heart beats with anxiety, studies ease and affects good humor." Goldsmith was this "whimsically dismal" creature at this time; but those who understood him found his subtle Irish humor delightful in conversation. His letters supposed to be written by an observing Chinese, under the title of the *Citizen of the World*, came next. They are very keen, very clear, but without bitterness. What a contrast they offer to the cynical satire of Pope's hits at folly! If he says that the women of the city wear patches all over their faces, except on the tips of their noses, or makes fun of the elderly lady who appears in the Park dressed as a girl of sixteen, there is no jeer or sneer at womanhood in his humor. His heart was always gentle; he never forgot, like Swift, that he had a mother; he never wrote of women as if they were heartless puppets, like Pope; he was, as Sir Walter Scott says, always on the side of virtue.

157. **Johnson's Kindness.**—Admirers of talent begin

to find him out, and among them is autocratic, pompous, kind-hearted, pious, generous Dr. Johnson — the great literary Tsar of his time. If you want to know in what reverence he was held, you will find it reflected in the amazement of Becky Sharp's schoolmistress when that too clever young lady throws the august Doctor's dictionary out of the carriage window, in the first chapter of *Vanity Fair*, and Miss Jemima Pinkerton almost faints with horror. To be sought out by this great man, who was in Goldsmith's time what Addison had been in Pope's, was a marvellous honor. And Goldsmith, though a greater genius than Johnson, was always grateful for it. We are told by Boswell, the author of the finest biography in the English language, that Goldsmith was envious of Johnson, when in fact simple, honest, loyal Oliver was incapable of envy. He may have been irritated by the constant, fulsome praise of the author of *Rasselas* which thickened the air around him, as if a bottle of musk had to be broken whenever he opened his mouth; and it is certain that Boswell the admirer and Johnson the dictator, with their coterie of flatterers, must have been sufficiently exasperating to warrant occasional expressions of impatience from Goldsmith. He never tore and rent his friend, as Pope tore and rent Addison, with the cruelest stabs of satire in our language. Sir Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke, and other great men became his friends.

For a time Goldsmith disappeared from among them. He had run into debt for fine clothes and other things, — he acknowledged that his principal objection to becoming a clergyman was because he could not wear colored clothes, — and one day Dr. Johnson received a message to the effect that he was in danger of arrest for a debt to his landlady. Johnson sent him a guinea, and followed it as quickly as he could; he found that Goldsmith had already changed it, for there was a bottle of Madeira, with a glass, before him. Johnson corked the bottle, and Goldsmith told him that he was much in debt for rent, but that he had an unpublished novel in his desk. Johnson looked at the manuscript, saw that it had merit, and went to a bookseller and sold it for sixty pounds. This novel, sold to pay Goldsmith's rent and to keep him out of prison, was the famous *Vicar of Wakefield*. Later, its proceeds would have paid Goldsmith's rent hundreds of times over.

158. **In 1764 there were no English Poets.**— Suddenly there appeared a poem that had all Pope's art and none of his artificiality, all his consummate polish, with more depth of thought and sincerity than he had ever had. But perhaps Goldsmith's style would have been impossible, if Pope had not purified the expression of English verse for him, as Dryden purified it for Pope. *The Traveller* took England by storm. Goldsmith had written it over and over again, chastening and improving each epithet until it was

as clear as crystal and as direct as a needle to the pole. He had wrought, not for money this time, but for fame — and he got both. *The Traveller* is a series of lovely pictures, shown, like a panorama, to the sound of a series of as lovely melodies. Macaulay admires very much the plot and the philosophy of this poem, while he declares that Goldsmith's plots were generally bad. The value of *The Traveller* lies not in the fable or in the philosophy; the reflections of the English tourist, who from a crag in the Alps looks down on the countries beneath, have no particular interest; we do not care much about him or his conclusion that, in spite of circumstances, our happiness depends on the regulation of our minds.

Goldsmith's poem *The Traveller* (1764) is a series of beautiful pictures. Its verse is exquisitely musical. He had worked carefully upon it. Talent and care had produced genius.

The success of *The Traveller* made *The Vicar of Wakefield* successful. A new poetic star had arisen, announced by the infallible authority, Dr. Johnson, as the greatest since Pope, and a novel by this paragon must be in the hands of every person of taste. The fashionable ladies wept over the trials of the Vicar and laughed at poor Moses and the spectacles, while their hair was powdered for the assembly; in the town of Bath, the most modish of resorts for health, the beaux and belles talked over it as they drank the waters in the pump room.

Books were coming into fashion again, but cards were not going out. Everybody gambled; Goldsmith, in his earlier days, had gambled too; and even the good Dr. Johnson regretted that he was ignorant of cards. We can imagine this good Dr. Johnson, in a laced waistcoat with certain grease-spots on it, for he was not as careful as he might have been, discussing the beauties of his friend's poem to a chosen circle at some great lady's feast. Goldsmith seldom went to such feasts, for he had an awe of ladies attired in all their splendor. But Johnson occasionally condescended to take tea, a dozen dishes or so, — our ancestors never spoke of cups, — with Lady Betty Modish or some other personage of the grand world. And then the good Doctor enjoyed himself, for he was fond of eating, and we may be sure that if he helped himself to a dozen dishes of tea he did not spare more solid viands. And all the while he talked in his sonorous way, showing a deep Christian reverence for Christian things, until the great lady fears that he will one day die a Papist, like the late Mr. Pope. But the Doctor shakes his head, though he believes in making satisfaction for sin even in this world, and there is a story that he stood for a long time bare-headed in the rain before a shop in his native place for some unfilial act committed against his parents.

159. **A Picture of Manners.** — The good Doctor is dining at three o'clock with the great lady, whose



hair is magnificently beribboned and powdered; it towers high, and her gown of satin, with silver flowers, has elaborate panniers; she taps the table with a fan painted with shepherds and shepherdesses by Watteau; she is dressed, not because the great Doctor is there, but because she is going to sit in a box at the theatre after dinner, and see Dr. Goldsmith's new play, *The Good-Natured Man*, — for Dr. Goldsmith has so been emboldened by the success of *The Traveller* and *The Vicar of Wakefield* that he has tried to conquer the stage. There is a young lady of the court, too, in less elaborate dress than her friend's, with a lower head-gear, who hopes that Mr. Goldsmith's play will not be too funny. She is of the opinion that one ought to cry at a comedy, and that laughter is vulgar; besides, she says, 't is the fashion to cry at the theatre — did she herself not spoil a cherry-colored satin gown with her tears the other night at the comedy of *False Delicacy*?

But the Doctor does not answer, because his mouth is full. Spread before these three people are a sirloin of beef, a shoulder of veal, and a tongue and some fish, and Bordeaux and Burgundy and cider. After this course will come orange and almond pudding, and heavy fritters — which the great and fashionable lady will help with her hands, as is the custom, not disdaining to lick the grease from her fingers in a gleeful way which causes the amiable Doctor to smile. A little later soup, pork puddings,

and roast goose will be served ; but my lady will refuse them, saying that she has no appetite, as she has taken a tankard of ale and some stewed chicken about half an hour ago.

The young lady tells how a very pleasant young gentleman of her acquaintance hired three fiddlers and gave her and her sister a dance on the previous evening, and how he took each in turn out on the waxed floor of her father's oak-panelled hall, and how they tripped stately figures to the old tunes of *Malbrook s'en va-t-en Guerre* and *Water Parted*. She tells, too, that the young gentleman was met by footpads on his way home, and his purse and beautifully carved dress-sword taken, but that no harm was done him. And the great lady tells a pleasant joke as to how some young bloods of her acquaintance agreed to make an old man of their acquaintance drunk, and how well they succeeded in bringing his gray hairs to shame ; and how there is to be a hanging soon, to which all the gay of the town will go. And the great Doctor is too much occupied with the succulent goose to take notice of this fashionable rattle.

After dinner, which is washed down by much tea — at thirty shillings a pound, — and more wine, — the great lady's sedan chair appears, for a yellow fog makes the city dark. The link-boys come, bearing torches, "links," and bending her head in order to enter the conveyance, she is borne away to wit-

ness, after a chat with a friend, *The Good-Natured Man*.

*The Good-Natured Man* proved to be too funny for the taste of the town. The play-goers, accustomed to very sentimental comedies, pronounced it "low," and no doubt our great lady was of that opinion, as she sat in the candle-lighted Covent Garden Theatre beside her husband, whose wig was very large, whose muff of fox-skin was almost as large, and whose snuff-box glittered with brilliants. This was on Friday, January 29, 1768, when Goldsmith had reached the age of forty. He was at the play in a new wig and a suit of "purple bloom, satin grain, with garter blue silk breeches." He received £500 for the play, but whether this suit and the other, "lined with silk and gold buttons," were ever paid for, we are not sure. Goldsmith found it easy to give, but hard to pay.

160. **Goldsmith a Favorite.**— He was overwhelmed with invitations. It must be admitted that he assumed airs at times, but they were innocent assumptions. He once said to his friend Beauclerc, that, "although he was a doctor, he never prescribed for anybody but a few friends." "It would be better," Beauclerc said, "to prescribe for your enemies." Johnson, who thundered speeches on all around him, as the giant Antæus might have thundered at the pygmies, was very gentle to "Goldy," and Boswell preserves several speeches, in which Goldsmith,

though a poor talker, had the best of the argument. One is the celebrated hit at Dr. Johnson's pompous language. Goldsmith was telling the story of the petition of the little fishes to Jupiter. He saw that Johnson was laughing.

"Why, Dr. Johnson," he said, "this is not so easy as you seem to think; for, if you were to make little fishes speak, they would talk like WHALES." Dr. Johnson, who, as you may have guessed, was fond of eating, remarked that kidneys were "pretty little things," but that one may eat a great many of them without being satisfied. "Yes," said Goldsmith, "but how many of them would reach to the moon?" The autocrat does not know. "Why, *one*, sir, if it were long enough." Johnson, for once, was conquered. "Well, sir," he said, "I have deserved it; I should not have provoked so foolish an answer by so foolish a question."

Johnson, the big-hearted, the intolerant, the intolerable, was always loyal to Goldsmith, though he sometimes pounced on him in conversation. "Whether, indeed, we take Goldsmith as a poet, a comic-writer, or an historian," he said emphatically, "he stands *first-class*." Posterity has endorsed this verdict so far as it touches the author of *The Vicar of Wakefield's* humor and poetry, but his histories are compilations of no value, except for their charming style. Like his *History of Animated Nature*, they were written for money. No man was more unfitted

to write such a book than Goldsmith. It is full of the most amusing mistakes. He tells of talking monkeys and other animals. "He could tell a horse from a cow," Dr. Johnson admitted, "and beef from mutton when it was boiled." Nevertheless, it brought him 800 guineas, nearly nine thousand dollars of our money.

*The Traveller* showed Goldsmith's loyalty of heart. Instead of selecting a wealthy and titled patron for the beautiful poem, he dedicated it to his brother, who was a "poor parson," rich, like his father, "on forty pounds a year." His heart, he says,

"Still to my brother turns with ceaseless pain,  
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain."

In this poem occur several American names, for the first time perhaps in English literature; and in one line he makes a false quantity of "Niagara":—

"Where wild Oswego spreads her swamps around,  
And Niagara stuns with thundering sound."

161. Goldsmith's next comedy was "**She Stoops to Conquer**"—a play which to-day is even more fresh and popular than when it was first produced. To read it with perfect enjoyment, one ought to have Harper's edition with the wonderful illustrations by Abbey. The fashionable people of the town, who were coarse enough in their common speech and conduct, found this comedy too comic, after the mawkish

sentimentality they were accustomed to. But it was too good not to succeed, and succeed it did.

The most pathetic of all the poems of the eighteenth century, is *The Deserted Village*. It was the cry of an exile; the plaint of an Irish thrush pent in by dusty bars. How poor "Goldy," wearied of work and of debt, longed for —

"The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade."

Oh, for a sight of the clear stream, where the water-cresses grew! Oh, for the homely sights and sounds! Like Wordsworth, in *The Prelude*, Goldsmith goes back to the days of his boyhood, and yearns to get close to Nature again. Wordsworth and Coleridge, the critics say, were the first English poets to unite the love of man and of nature in their poems, — to send away the false shepherds that, in classic guise, did duty for common English folk, to send their honest yeoman tramping through real fields and not through theatrical flowery meads, carrying myrtle and cyprus. But this honor belongs to Goldsmith. As Pope was his pioneer in polished *technique*, he was Wordsworth's in his sympathy for man and nature. Moreover, he is not condescending, as Wordsworth is when he treats the life of the common people, nor is he self-conscious. The opening lines, hackneyed though they are, will never grow faded.

The most graceful, the most really elegant of all

the eighteenth-century writers was Oliver Goldsmith. He could not say, "No." This was the principal fault of one of the most generous, most kindly humorous and sympathetic writers that ever existed. He died in 1774, unhappy, overwhelmed with debts, and despondent.

162. **The Drama. Restoration to Goldsmith.** — The English Drama began to decay after the death of Shakspeare. Puritanism killed it for a time; and when it arose on the restoration of Charles II. to the throne, it became a vehicle of coarseness and licentiousness. Actresses played for the first time in the theatres. Hitherto, the woman's parts had been taken by boys. The playwrights stole from the French of Corneille, Racine, and Molière, all but their morality. It is remarkable that, at this period, the French stage was moral, while the English was unspeakably bad. William Wycherley (1640–1715) made clever, but licentious plays. William Congreve (1670–1729), Sir John Vanbrugh (1672–1726), and George Farquhar (1678–1707), were brilliant, sparkling, and grossly immoral. Dryden's comedies unhappily deserve the regret he expresses for the same fault. The Duke of Buckingham ridiculed the heroic manner of his great epic-play, *The Siege of Granada*, in a burlesque called *The Rehearsal*. Nat Lee (1655–92) wrote the *Rival Queens*, a tragedy of some merit; Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserved* and *The Orphans* are

sometimes played, and Thomas Southern's *Fatal Marriage* is still remembered. Mrs. Behn during the Restoration, and Mrs. Centlivre in the reign of Queen Anne showed that women could be as coarse as the worst of the men. Sir Richard Steele wrote *The Lying Lover*, a sentimental piece with a moral; Addison produced his tiresome *Cato*; Nicholas Rowe wrote cleanly, but his heroic plays are forgotten. *The Beggar's Opera*, 1728, by Gay, was the prototype of *Pinafore* and *The Mikado*. Colley Cibber (time of George II.), Fielding, Foote, and Garrick, wrote light and amusing plays. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* and *The Good-natured Man*, and Sheridan's *Rivals* and *School for Scandal* deservedly hold the stage still.



## CHAPTER XIII

*The Poetry of the Nineteenth Century.*—*Robert Burns, Wordsworth, Mangan, Aubrey De Vere*

163. **The New Age.**—“With the new age,” says Mr. John Dennis, an acute and sympathetic critic, “arose a fresh springtime of poetry, to be followed by a lovely summer. It was as if every bush was bursting into blossom, every bird into song, every flower in meadow and wood opening its eyes in the sunshine.”

164. **Robert Burns (1759-96)** was the earliest of the poets of this “new age.” He was a Scotch farmer, like his father, and he followed the plough for a living. He was not uneducated; he had acquired a little Latin, some French, and a good knowledge of English Grammar. His first book of poems, *Kilmarnock*, was received with appreciation. Burns, though living until he was twenty-three the life of a Scotch peasant, had been educated by the influences of his time. He read the same books read by the most cultivated man in London. His reputation rests chiefly on his songs, which will live side by side with those of his melodious contempo-

rary, Thomas Moore. Burns has been accused of irreligion; he does not scoff at religion, but only at the hypocritical professors of it. All of his poems are not moral; his life, in truth, was ruined by passions which he might have controlled. His songs *Auld Lang Syne*, *John Anderson my Jo*, *A Red, Red Rose*, *A Man's a Man for a' That*, and *O Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast*, are sung in all civilized countries. His best poems are in the Scottish dialect. *Tam O'Shanter*, a long poem, is in this dialect; the exquisite *Cotter's Saturday Night* is not. He is justly placed among the greater poets of Europe. In *A Bard's Epitaph*, he sadly describes himself:—

“Is there a man whose judgment clear,  
 Can others teach the course to steer,  
 Yet runs, himself, life's mad career  
     Wild as the wave;  
 Here pause — and, thro' the starting tear,  
     Survey this grave.

“The poor inhabitant below  
 Was quick to learn, and wise to know,  
 And keenly felt the friendly glow,  
     And softer flame;  
 But thoughtless follies laid him low,  
     And stained his name.

“Reader, attend — whether thy soul  
 Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,  
 Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,  
     In low pursuit;  
 Know, prudent, cautious self-control  
     Is wisdom's root.”

165. **Thomas Percy (1729–1811)**, a bishop of the Church of England, collected his famous *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, consisting of old ballads. James Hogg, “The Ettrick Shepherd” (1770–1835), wrote *The Queen’s Wake*, in which occurs his sweetest poem, *Bonny Kilmeny*. Hogg was a sheep-farmer; but Sir Walter Scott discovered his genius. He left Selkirkshire, in Scotland, and went to Edinburgh; he was one of the projectors of *Blackwood’s Magazine*. His poems are tender and fanciful; sometimes childish and extravagant.

166. **Thomas Campbell (1777–1844)** was born in Glasgow; he published *The Pleasures of Hope* at the age of twenty-one. It was modelled on *The Pleasures of Memory*, by Samuel Rogers (1763–1855). This poem and *O’Connor’s Child* are his best long poems, although some critics put *Gertrude of Wyoming* above the first. His ballads, *Hohenlinden*, *The Battle of the Baltie*, and *The Exile of Erin*, are justly cherished and admired. Campbell was buried in Westminster Abbey. Among other poets of this period were John Wilson (“Christopher North”), — who wrote, in addition to the brilliant conversations called *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, the poems, *Isle of Palms* and *The City of the Plague*, — and Arthur Hugh Clough, author of *The Bothie*.

167. **Thomas Moore** was born in Dublin, in 1779. He was called the prince of song-writers, and he is certainly in the first rank of lyrical poets who have

written in English. He began to write at the age of thirteen. He went to London in 1799, and at once became the pet of fashionable society. In 1803 he was made Admiralty Registrar at Bermuda, but he resigned this position to a deputy, and, after a tour in the United States and Canada, went back to England. At present Moore is as much underrated as a poet as he was overrated while he lived. He, of all English writers of songs, has only two equals, Burns and Shelley. He said, with truth, of Irish song:—

“ Dear Harp of my Country! in darkness I found thee,  
 The cold chain of silence had hung o’er thee long,  
 When proudly, my own Island Harp, I unbound thee,  
 And gave all thy chords to light, freedom, and song ! ”

*Lalla Rookh* and *The Loves of the Angels* are still read, and the allusions to the *Veiled Prophet* are many: but they are not great poems. In fact, closely examined, they are the works of a scholar and a maker of pretty phrases rather than of a bard. His *Odes to Anaereon* and *Little’s Poems* are unhappily blemished by immoral allusions. Lord Byron, in fact, whose *Don Juan* was condemned by moral taste, declared that *Little’s* (Moore’s) *Poems* were more immoral. Moore writes many clever satires, of which *The Fudge Family Abroad* is the best. He wrote a *Life of Byron*, a *History of Ireland*, *The Travels of an Irish Gentleman in Search of a Religion*, and an admirable novel, *The Epicurean*. Moore

was a Catholic, well instructed, and conscious of the value of his religion. It is a pity that he did not permit its influence to guide him more in his life and works. He was the most intimate friend of Lord Byron, and no doubt if Moore had been a consistent Catholic, Byron's often expressed admiration for the Church would have become something more. He died at Sloperton, February 25, 1852, having seen his five children go before him.

168. **Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)** was born a poet of a very high order; he made himself a bad man. No amount of admiration for his genius can blind us to his breaking every moral law. He has been called "the poet's poet." Shelley is enthusiastically admired by all who love poetry for the qualities that make it so entirely different from prose. Wordsworth, Byron, and Moore influenced Shelley, but he had an individuality most marked. Shelley is one of the poets whose writings are best appreciated by poets. Mr. Aubrey de Vere mentions Shelley's *Cenci* as one of the greatest dramatic works of the present century. Its subject unhappily makes it unfit for general reading. Shelley is first of modern English lyrical writers. *To a Skylark* is exquisite in feeling and treatment. His most important poems are *Queen Mab*, *Hellas*, *The Revolt of Islam*, *Witch of Atlas*, *Alastor*, and *Prometheus Unbound*.

169. **John Keats (1795-1821)** is another poet of the poets. His life was sad and short. Deeply sen-

sitive, his health, never very good, was shattered by the ferocious attacks of the critics on *Endymion*. These savage reviews appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, April, 1818, and in *Blackwood's Magazine*, August, 1818. His *Ode to a Nightingale* and *To a Greeian Urn* should be read with Shelley's *Ode to the Skylark*. Keats wrote an almost perfect sonnet, *On Reading Chapman's Homer*. *Endymion* begins with the famous lines:—

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever :  
Its loveliness increases ; it will never  
Pass into nothingness.”

Although not a classical scholar, Keats expressed in *Endymion* the Greek spirit more sympathetically than any other English poet. *The Eve of St. Agnes* and *The Pot of Basil* are full of rich and poetical expressions. Keats does not inspire or ennoble ; he simply satisfies a taste for beauty. He is not like a trumpet, calling to high actions ; he is like a violoncello, soft, sweet, and rich. Keats died at the age of twenty-six, in 1821.

170. **Lord Byron** (born Jan. 22, 1788, died April 19, 1824) was a remarkable man and a poet of a high order. George Gordon, Lord Byron, produced an enormous amount of really good poetry in a short lifetime. Like Pope, Byron was a cripple ; he was what is called “club-footed ;” and this, although he was one of the handsomest men of his time, helped to make him bitter. He became a man of fashion,

while remaining a man of genius. From his boyhood he was artificial and seemingly insincere; but at heart he was sincere enough. He needed only good influences to make him great. Of all English poets, he is most remarkable for versatility with strength, and artifice with fire. In spite of the immorality of *Don Juan*, he showed an earnest desire for higher things at times. Pope and Byron were not unlike in temperament; but Byron, while not as correct as Pope, was the greater poet. He could be as stinging in his satire as the older man, and as malicious. At the age of seventeen, Byron published his *Hours of Idleness*. It was ferociously mangled by the tomahawk of the *Edinburgh Review*. His reply to this, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, gave him reputation; but he left England and began *Childe Harold*. On his return to England, in 1812, he published the first two cantos; "he awoke and found himself famous." *Childe Harold* more than repeated the successes made by Goldsmith's *Traveller*. The town went wild about it. It was overrated at the time, as it is underrated now. The best part of it are the description of Nature — those of the thunderstorm and the ocean being really sublime. In *Beppo*, he struck a new vein, that of comedy; and a new form of verse, which he borrowed from the Italian. His serious poems *The Giaour*, *Bride of Abydos*, *Mazeppa*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, and *Parisina*, are artificial, insincere, and gloomy. His heroes are grand,

weird, wicked creatures, who fancy they are heroic when they are only selfish. Socially he pretended to be an aristocrat, but at heart he was a democrat; he gave up his life for the liberties of Greece, and made it known in Europe that it was possible for a British lord to sympathize with the cause of the people. In 1815 he was married. In 1816, having separated from his wife, he left England, never to go back. After a residence in Switzerland, he went to Venice. Italy and Greece were the lands of his heart, though he was an Englishman by birth. His most important poems after *Childe Harold* are the *Siege of Corinth*, *Hebrew Melodies*, *Prometheus*, *Prisoner of Chillon*, *Manfred*, *Prophecy of Dante*, *The Vision of Judgment*, *Lament of Tasso*, *Werner*, *The Deformed Transformed*, and *The Island*.

His dramas contain fine passages. *Cain* and *Heaven and Earth* he called "mysteries," in imitation of the miracle plays of the middle ages. They were held to be blasphemous by the public when they first appeared. *Marino Faliero*, *The Two Foscari*, and *Sardanapalus* are dramas of unequal value, though they contain beautiful passages. Byron died of fever, at the age of thirty-six, when helping the Greeks to gain liberty. Goethe admired him; he was great and little at the same time; had he been true to his better nature, he would have left no regrets for us when we enjoy the fervor of his *Isles of Greece* or the organ-music of his address to



the ocean, or those exquisite lines beginning, "Know you the Land where the cypress and myrtle," which he paraphrased from Goethe. Byron was the first English poet, except Moore, to gain a universal reputation.

171. **Sir Walter Scott** (born in Edinburgh, 1771; died at Abbotsford, 1832) holds a high place in poetical literature; but his best work is found in his novels. Scott took to prose when the meteoric Byron arose. Before that time, his romances in verse, his lyrics and ballads had made him famous. He was the first writer of the romantic school. His spirit loved the atmosphere of the middle ages; he revelled in tournaments, pageants, and the clash of arms. It is easy to believe that some of his most stirring poems were composed on horseback, for they have the motion of the gallop in their rhythm and rhyme. Walter Scott began life as a lawyer, following his father's profession; but he dropped it for literature, publishing in 1799 a translation of Goethe's romantic poem, *Götz von Berlichingen*. He produced *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, 1805, *Marmion*, 1808, *The Lady of the Lake*, 1810, *Don Roderick*, 1811, *Triermain and Rokeby*, 1813. *The Lord of the Isles*, 1815, and *Harold the Dauntless*, 1817, were printed after his first successful novel, *Waverley*, appeared. A few minor poems, including the *Farewell to the Muse* (1822), ended his poetical works. We have to regret that this noble-natured man, whose

genius was so virile and sincere, should have, through ignorance of Catholic practices, disfigured *Marmion* with the absurd episode of the buried nun. The influence that made Sir Walter the poet of romance came from Goethe and the Germans, as well as from the Celts. Like the North, he was "tender and true." His life and works were those of a manly man — chaste, noble, honest.

172. **William Wordsworth**, born April 7, 1770, in the Cumberland Highlands, in England, left a great mass of beautiful poetry and a few commonplace verses. Wordsworth will never be a popular poet until the great crowd of the people learn to value thought rather than sentiment. Like Milton, Wordsworth accepted his mission to write and was consciously a poet. He believed that he was a teacher, and his duties were summed up in these noble words: "To console the afflicted; *to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier*; to teach the young and the gracious of every age *to see, to think, and feel*, and therefore to become more securely virtuous." Wordsworth loved nature; he studied the sky, the lakes, the woods, the fields, as closely and with as much love as the child studies the face of its mother. Thomson, the author of *The Seasons*, and Burns and Gray and Cowper had this great love for nature, too; but not in the degree possessed by William Wordsworth. The French Revolution was an outbreak of hatred, — a reign of

terror and a rain of blood; it was as well the sun-dering of artificial forms which had begun to rule too much the life of men. Wordsworth saw only the good done by this upheaval. He was the first conscious poet of the common people. Up to his time, readers of poetry seemed to think that there was no beauty in the lives of the poor.

Wordsworth had a different opinion; he saw that greatness and pathos, and all high virtues existed as well by the peasant's hearth as in the palace of the prince. His early poems, inspired by his belief in his mission as a teacher, were received with derision. The storm of ridicule that killed Keats only seemed to make Wordsworth stronger. "He claimed for *Lucy Gray*," Mr. R. W. Church says, "for the 'miserable mother by the *Thorn*,' for the desolate maniac nursing her infant, the same pity which we give to Lear and Cordelia or 'to the dark sorrows of the line of Thebes.'"<sup>1</sup>

Wordsworth, having taken his degree at Cambridge, went to France full of enthusiasm for the Revolution. Its horrors drove him home again. He changed his political opinions and ceased to apologize for the furies of murder and irreligion. In 1793 he published his first volume of poems, and in 1798 appeared the first volume of *Lyrical Ballads*, to which Coleridge contributed *The Ancient Mariner*. Coleridge and he went to Germany together; he

<sup>1</sup> Sophocles.

lived for some time at Grasmere with his sister. After his marriage, in 1802, he settled at Rydal Mount, in that lovely lake-country which he made famous; he was the best of the "lake" school of poets. His principal philosophical poems are *The Prelude* (1805) in which he shows the working of his own mind, and *The Excursion* (1814). He wrote many sonnets, inspired by passing events, *Scorn not the sonnet*, and *The world is too much with us* are among the best sonnets in the English language. The latter is merely the expression of a mood, and Wordsworth did not intend it to be taken in an unchristian sense. His famous lines to the Blessed Virgin, *Our tainted nature's solitary boast*, would alone make us love this great poet, if he had not a hundred other claims to our affection. His words, like Shakspeare's, have become part of our language. How many times have these lines from the *Ode to Immortality* been quoted:—

“ Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting ;  
 The soul that rises with us, our life's star,  
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
 And cometh from afar :  
     Not in entire forgetfulness,  
     And not in utter nakedness,  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
 From God, who is our home.”

*Lucy* and *Lucy Gray* are household poems; so, also, are *The Sea Shell* and *She was a Phantom of Delight*, in which are the well-known lines:—

“A perfect woman, nobly planned,  
 To warn, to comfort, and command;  
 And yet a spirit still, and bright  
 With something of angelic light.”

Everybody knows, or ought to know, the sonnet,  
*Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room.*

Wordsworth's long poems have long patches of pompous and uninteresting writing in them; so have Milton's and Dryden's and Browning's. Shakspeare even has passages that seem almost foolish to modern ears; but Wordsworth will be more and more appreciated as years go by and people learn more and more to love peace and nobility of thought expressed in noble language. Wordsworth did for the English peasant what Millet, in his picture, *The Angelus*, has done for his French brother; he showed that coarse clothes and hard labor do not separate in heart the rich and the poor. He died at Rydal Mount, April 23, 1850. His only attempt to write a drama was *The Borderers* (1796). It was a failure. His *Ode to Immortality* is one of the greatest lyrics in the English language.

173. **Aubrey de Vere** is naturally suggested by the name of Wordsworth. The father of this great poet, Sir Aubrey de Vere, shared with his son the friendship and admiration of Wordsworth. Sir Aubrey de Vere's highest achievement was his tragedy *Mary Tudor*, which is one of the few magnificent plays written in modern times. The son-

nets of Sir Aubrey de Vere were warmly praised by Wordsworth as the "most perfect of our age." In England, the eldest son of a baronet inherits the title; therefore Sir Stephen de Vere, well known by his admirable translations from Homer, is the present baronet. Aubrey de Vere is his younger brother, the third son of Sir Aubrey, who died in 1846.

Aubrey de Vere was born January 10, 1814. He has led a life suitable to a poet, at his home, Curragh Chase, near Adare, in Ireland. He says, "I became a Catholic, in 1851; a blessing for which I feel more grateful every successive year." He has been a voluminous writer both in prose and poetry. His prose works are *English Misrule and Irish Misdeds* (1848), *Picturesque Sketches of Greece and Turkey* (1859), *Ireland's Church Property and Right Use of It* (1867), *Pleas for Secularization* (1867), *The Church Settlement of Ireland* (1868), *Constitutional and Unconstitutional Political Action* (1881), *Essay Chiefly on Poetry* (1887), and *Essays, Literary and Critical* (1889). The last two are the most valuable of his prose works; they are a mine of good principles, fine, æsthetic teaching, and the high literary art.

174. **Alexander the Great and St. Thomas of Canterbury**, both dramatic poems, are masterpieces. Tennyson's efforts at the production of a tragedy are dwarfed by the masterly work of his contemporary

poet. De Vere has written the most mighty drama since Shakspeare or Dryden. This is *Alexander the Great*. If it had been done by an actor, like Shakspeare it would be familiar to the people at large ; it would be popular. At present, it is known to comparatively few ; but its reputation grows every year. Another masterpiece is De Vere's *St. Thomas of Canterbury*.<sup>1</sup> It is a wonderful piece of dramatic art, at once sublime and human, and absolutely true to nature and to history. Tennyson, the greatest of modern poets in so many departments of his art, failed when he tried to write tragedy. But Aubrey De Vere stands alone as the only modern poet who has produced a grand tragedy. Like Dryden's *Almanzor and Almahide*, it is not arranged for acting. His tragedies are the work of a man of genius.

Aubrey De Vere's *May Carols*, *The Search after Proserpine*, *Poems*, *Miscellaneous and Sacred Irish Odes and Other Poems*, *The Legends of St. Patrick*, *Legends of the Saxon Saints*, *The Foray of Queen Meave*, and *Legends and Records of the Church and the Empire* — have all poetic merit. The time has now come for sifting the didactic element from these verses, which glitter with pure gems of poetry. Aubrey de Vere is not a great lyrist ; but as a writer of tragedies he is the greatest of our time ; he is a giant among lesser sages ; the poetic traditions of

<sup>1</sup> For a contrast between this drama and Tennyson's *Becket*, see Dr. Egan's Lectures. (W. H. Sadlier & Co.)

Shakspeare and Dryden are his; and each day brings a more general recognition of this fact.

175. **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**, born in 1772, is best known to the general public by his weird and unique poems, the *Ancient Mariner* (1798) and *Christabel* (1816). Coleridge was undoubtedly a man of genius, injured by disease. He was unhappily an opium eater. His *Kubla Khan* seems like a nightmare. He was learned, a keen student of the English language and of nature, but unbalanced. His prose is confined mostly to boggy questions of German Metaphysics; his papers on Shakspeare are remarkable. He wrote by fits and starts, but talked, always with his eyes shut, constantly and brilliantly. Of him the story is told that once meeting a friend he began a most exhaustive lecture, holding the button of his friend's coat in his hand. The friend cut off the button and disappeared — Coleridge remained in the street, talking, with the button in his hand. Coleridge was the first of the later school of poets called the Pre-Raphaelites, to whom he gave their keynote in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and *Christabel*. Probably the lines from the latter poem most often quoted are: —

“Alas! they had been friends in youth;  
And whispering tongues can poison truth;  
And constancy lives in realms above;  
    And life is thorny; and youth is vain;  
And to be wroth with one we love,  
    Doth work like madness in the brain.”



176. **Wordsworth and Coleridge** were close friends, though as different in genius as *Christabel* is from *The Prelude*. Coleridge went back into the past — a dreamy, romantic past for him — and saw life as a vision that had some qualities of a nightmare. He died in 1834.

177. **Robert Southey**, born in 1774, was made poet-laureate in 1813. He wrote many prose works, his *Life of Nelson* being the only one that lives. Of his poems, *Joan of Arc* was written at the age of nineteen; it is his worst. *Roderic* (1814), a chronicle of Moorish conquest in Spain, is his best. It is picturesque, elevated, and artistic. His other important poems are *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801), *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), and *A Vision of Judgment* (1821). He died in 1843. His reputation becomes less with years.

178. **Minor Poets** are Samuel Rogers, *The Pleasures of Memory* (1793); Leigh Hunt, *The Story of Rimini* (1816); and Thomas Love Peacock, *Rhododaphne* (1818). Walter Savage Landor is best known by *Count Julian*. Bryan Waller Procter, father of Adelaide Procter, lives in his

“ The Sea ! the Sea ! the open Sea !  
The blue, the fresh, the ever free ! ”

Ebenezer Elliott, by his sonnet on *The Three Marys*. Hartley Coleridge, son of Samuel Coleridge, is one of the better poets still loved and read.

179. **William Motherwell** is remembered only by

his beautiful ballad, *Jeanie Morrison*. Thomas Lovell Beddoes, who died in 1849, was an imitator of the most gloomy of the Elizabethan dramatists; his *Death's Jest Book* is full of horrors. Sydney Dobell's *Balder* is rich, tropical, incomplete, poetical. Charles Kingsley, whose falsely historical novel, *Hypatia*, is well known, wrote some interesting ballads, *The Three Tybees* and *The Sands of Dee*.

180. **Thomas Hood** (born in 1799, died in 1845) still holds a large place in public favor; his *Dream of Eugene Aram*, *The Song of the Shirt*, and *The Bridge of Sighs*, are among "the songs of the people." Lord Macaulay, the historian, left some ringing ballads, whose metrical value ought not to be underrated. Winthrop Mackworth Praed was the predecessor of Austin Dobson and his school of clever poets, delicate, fanciful, polished, and light. Mr. Dobson has written charming poems, reviving the French poetical forms of the *rondeau*, *ballade*, and *triolet*.

181. **Matthew Arnold's** poems (1822–1888) have great merit, but he was first of all a prose writer. His *Thyrsis* has been much praised. He lacked Faith, and consequently Hope. The same may be said of Arthur Hugh Clough. Clough, knowing no Christ, is painfully gloomy. His *Long Vacation Exercise* is an interesting exercise in hexameters; he had great talent.

182. **The Brownings, Robert and Elizabeth**, occu-

pied much space in the literary chronicles of the nineteenth century. Elizabeth Browning was the strongest, most fervid of women poets. Her diction is rich, her metre careless, as are her rhymes; her view of Italian politics possible only to a woman who knew only one side of those politics. She lives in *Aurora Leigh* (1856). Robert Browning, her husband, who died in 1889, has not yet been permanently placed in the galaxy of the poets. That he was a true poet, there can be no doubt; but whether he is a constellation or only a minor star, all critics have not decided. Some of his poems deserve the epithet "magnificent." It seems strange that such a keen-sighted and scholarly man should have so little understood the Catholic side of Italian history or the minds of Catholics. Browning is popularly known by his ballad, *How they Carried the Good News from Ghent to Aix*. It is vulgar to laugh merely because others laugh, and this may be applied to many of the ignorant critics of Browning. He is a very great poet, and his claim to recognition is more reverently acknowledged every year by a growing number of the discerning. The best edition of his *Poetic and Dramatic Works* is printed by Houghton and Mifflin in six volumes. It includes of course, the play *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, the most incomprehensible of his poems, *Sordello*, and the sublime *Grammarian's Funeral*.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *Poetry of the Nineteenth Century. — Lord Tennyson*

183. **Lord Tennyson** was a great English poet, but not the greatest of English poets. His influence on the life and literature of our time was immense. He at once expressed and reflected the spirit of our century, although of late there has been a perceptible move against his teachings, or rather his ideals. A literary generation that adores Rudyard Kipling cannot be expected to admire the purity and delicacy of a poet who never fails to throw all the light of a glorious art around truth, purity, and duty.

184. **King Arthur** is too ideal, too pure, for tastes formed by realism, and the readers of novels which depend for their success on sensationalism find Tennyson's exquisite pictures of nature without interest. Tennyson succeeded Wordsworth and Byron. While Wordsworth was serene, a painter of nature, Byron was the opposite. He was popular, while Wordsworth, whom the world is now only beginning to acknowledge, was neglected ; so that,

strange as it may seem at first, Tennyson's immediate progenitor was Lord Byron. Byron's popularity was great while he lived; young men quoted him, wore wide and turned-down collars, assumed a pirate-like look and an appearance of wickedness which were supposed to be Byronic. This generation passed away, or rather grew older, and the younger people became Tennysonian. They were sentimental; but they did not affect Byronic desperation or mysterious wickedness.

185. "**Locksley Hall.**" — In *Locksley Hall* the hero sighs and moans, and calls Heaven's vengeance down on his ancestral roof because a young girl has refused to marry him; because his cousin Amy marries another man, he goes into a paroxysm of poetry and denunciation and prophecy. But as Shakespeare says, "Many men have died, but not for love." And the hero of *Locksley Hall* lives to write in a calmer style a good many years later. *Maud*, another famous poem, like *Locksley Hall*, shows something of the influence of Byron. It is a love story too, broken, incoherent, but very poetical.

After *Locksley Hall* and *Maud*, the influence of Byron on Tennyson seems to grow less.

186. In studying the poetry of poets, it is a wise thing to study the influence of poets upon it. The young Tennyson's favorite poet was Thomson, — he of the serene and gentle *Seasons*. Alfred Tennyson

was born at Somersby in Lincolnshire, England, on August 6, 1809. He began to write stories when he was very young. He wrote chapters of unending novels which he put, day after day, under the potato bowl on the table. Miss Thackeray says that one of these, which lasted for months, was called *The Old Horse*. She gives this account of his first poem :

187. “**Alfred’s first verses**, so I have heard him say, were written upon a slate which his brother Charles put into his hands one Sunday at Louth, when all the elders of the party were going to church, and the child was left. Charles gave him a subject—the flowers in the garden; and when he came back from church little Alfred brought the slate to his brother, covered with written lines of blank verse. They were made on the models of Thomson’s *Seasons*, the only poetry he had ever read. One can picture it all to one’s self, the flowers in the garden, the verses, the little poet with waiting eyes, and the young brother scanning the lines. ‘Yes, you can write,’ said Charles, and he gave Alfred back the slate.”

188. **His Elegy**.—There is another story that his grandfather asked him to write an elegy on his grandmother. When it was written, the old gentleman gave the boy ten shillings, saying: “There, that is the first you have ever earned by your poetry, and, take my word for it, it will be your last.”

This Charles, who admitted that Alfred could write, became a very sweet poet himself as years went on. The poet of Alfred's first love was the calm and pleasant Thomson. Later, as he grew towards manhood, he read Byron, then the fashion. He scribbled in the Byronic strain. How strong a hold Byron's fiery verse had taken on the boy's mind is shown by his own confession. When Alfred was about fifteen, the news came that Byron was dead. "I thought the whole world was at an end," he said. "I thought everything was over and finished for every one — that nothing else mattered. I remember I walked out alone and carved 'Byron is dead' into the sandstone." Although *Locksley Hall* and *Maud* show Byronic reflections, yet they were not the earliest published of Tennyson's poems.

189. **The Poet's Life.** — His life was placid, serene, pleasant. At home he was in one of the sweetest spots in England; at college he lived among congenial friends, and his after-life was the ideal life of a poet. The premature death of his friend, Arthur Hallam, — to which we owe the magnificent poem, *In Memoriam*, — was the first sad event that came to him. Longfellow, his great contemporary, was also happy. And just before the tragic death of his wife, — she was burned to death, — a friend passing his cottage said: "I fear change for Longfellow, for any change must be for the worse."

And this is the drop of bitterness that must tinge

all our happiness in this world — the thought that most changes must be for the worse. But changes that came to Tennyson brought him more praise, more honor, until people began to say that the laureate could only mar the monument he had made for himself by trying to add too many ornaments to it.

190. **His First Volume.** — In his first volume, published fifty-nine years ago, he showed to the world a series of delicately tinted portraits of ladies: *Claribel, Lilian, Isabel, Mariana, Madeline, Adeline*; and his gorgeous set of pictures in arabesque, *Recollections of the Arabian Nights, Love and Death*, and *The Dying Swan*.

The appearance of this volume was not hailed as a revelation by the reading public. And indeed there was little in it to indicate the poet of *The Idyls of the King*, of *The Princess*, and of *In Memoriam*, except a fineness of art which no English poet has yet surpassed or even equalled. If *Airy, Fairy Lilian* is like a cherry stone minutely carved, yet Tennyson was the first poet to show how delicately such work could be done. If *Mariana in the Moated Grange* is only an exercise in sweet notes, what bard ever drew such exquisitely modulated tones from his lyre before? If it is “a little picture painted well,” where was the poet since Shakspeare who could have painted the picture so well? *The Owl*, though many laughed at it, had



something of the quality of Shakspeare's snatches of song.

191. **Byron's Influence.**— There was not a trace of Byron in this utterance. The poet who had won the prize offered by Cambridge for English poetry, in 1829, and who somewhat earlier had seemed in despair over the death of Byron, did not utter fierce heroics. He painted pictures with a feeling for art that was new in literature. How this wonderful technical nicety struck the sensitive young readers of the time, Edmund Clarence Stedman tells us in *The Victorian Poets*:—

“It is difficult now to realize how chaotic was the notion of art among English verse-makers at the beginning of Tennyson's career. Not even the example of Keats had taught the needful lesson, and I look upon his successor's early efforts as of no small importance. These were dreamy experiments in metre and word-painting, and spontaneous after their kind. Readers sought not to analyze their meaning and grace. The significance of art has since become so well understood, and such results have been attained, that *Claribel*, *Lilian*, *The Merman*, *The Dying Swan*, seem slight enough to us now; and even then the affectation pervading them, which was merely the error of a poetic soul groping for its true form of expression, repelled men of severe and established tastes; but to the neophyte they had the charm of sighing winds and babbling waters, a wonder of luxury and weirdness, inexpressible, not to be effaced.”

192. **Poetry as an Art.**—It was evident that Tennyson regarded poetry as an art. It was evident that this art was one that needed constant and persistent cultivation. It was evident that, deprived as he was of the material color of the painter, he was determined to make words flash, jewel-like, to make them burn in crimson, or to convey with all the vividness of a Murillo, tints,—not only the color, but the *tints*,—of the sky, the earth, even of the atmosphere itself.

Let us take *Mariana*, suggested by the song in Shakspeare's *Twelfth Night*. Look at the picture. The subject is that of a woman waiting in a country-house surrounded by a moat. It is a simple subject, not a complex or many-sided one. See how Tennyson gets as near color as words can. We may be sure that he cast and recast that poem many times before he printed it.

“ With blackest moss the flower plots  
 Were thickly crusted, one and all ;  
 The rusted nails fell from the knots  
 That held the peach to the garden wall.  
 The broken sheds looked sad and strange,  
 Unlifted was the clinking latch ;  
 Weeded and worn the ancient thatch  
 Upon the lonely moated grange.

“ All day within the dreamy house,  
 The doors upon their hinges creak'd ;  
 The blue fly sung in the pane ; the mouse  
 Behind the mouldering wainscot shrieked,  
 Or from the crevice peered about.”

Millet, in *The Angelus*, depicted sound by the magic of his brush, which had the potent spell of color. Similarly, Tennyson, in *Mariana*, overleaped the limitations of his art, and painted in words both color and sound.

Notice, too, how careful is his choice of epithets in this early book. He asks :

“ Wherefore those faint smiles of thine,  
*Spiritual Adeline ?* ”

193. **Tennyson's Taste.**— You will never find a fault of taste in Tennyson ; and if you should find a trochee where you expected an iambus, be sure it is there because the musician willed a discord. At the age of twenty-two, he published the volume containing *The Lady of Shalott* *Ænone*, *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*, *The May Queen*, *The Miller's Daughter*, *The Palace of Art*, *Of Old sat Freedom on the Heights*, and half a dozen others equally famous, equally exquisite, and all showing an advance in power over his first volume, and also a decrease in affectation.

*The Lady of Shalott* is an allegory,— for Tennyson, like all English poets from Chaucer down, is fond of allegories. In *The Lady of Shalott* we have the first hint of the poem we now know as *Elaine*.

194. “ **The Lady of Shalott** ” represents poetry, one of the helps to the intellectual progress of man. But, to remain strong and spiritual, poetry must be pure. It must not become worldly or earthly. It

must weave its web high above the sordid aims of sin. And so the Lady of Shalott worked.

“ There she weaves by night and day.  
 A magic web with colors gay,  
 She has heard a whisper say  
 A curse is on her if she stay  
 To look down to Camelot,  
 She knows not what the curse may be  
 And so she weaveth steadily,  
 And little other care hath she,  
 The Lady of Shalott.”

But after a time this wonderful lady, who weaves into her web for the solace and delight of man all the sights that pass her as shadows, is tempted to go down from her spiritual height. She yields to the temptation and dies. In this allegory we find the germ of *Elaine*, “ the lily maid of Astolat.”

195. “ **English Idyls.**”— In 1842 his third volume appeared. It was called *English Idyls and Other Poems*. This was the glorious fruition of a spring-time which had caught and garnered all the fresh beauty of the opening year. The April and May of the poet’s first poems had ripened into June, and the June, azure-skied, rich, blooming, gave promise of even greater loveliness.

In *The Lady of Shalott* we found the hint of *Elaine*. In this new volume we find studies for the great symphony to come — that English epic which is the poet’s masterpiece. In this volume is that Homeric fragment — the *Morte d’Arthur* — which is

one of the finest passages ever written in any language. Dante never wrote anything more sustained in strength, more heroic in style, more reticent in expression and deeper in feeling than

“So all day long the noise of battle rolled.”

But, to be logical, we must not consider the *Morte d'Arthur* here. In its place in this third volume it is really out of place. It belongs at the end of the completed *Idyls*, all of which we have now. But, in 1842 the world had only hints of them; in the third volume the most portentous hint was the *Morte d'Arthur*. There were others — *St. Agnes*, *Sir Galahad*, *Sir Lancelot*, and *Guinevere*.

196. **Tennyson's Love for Home.** — Looking through this third volume, you will find all the characteristics of the poet. Not only in the use of words carried to the highest point, the development of a fashion of blank verse which is as much Tennysonian as Spenser's verse is Spenserian, and a love for classic forms and allusions; but in a great love for English landscapes, English country life, English modes of speech, and English institutions. Above all, whether the poet tells us a Saxon legend, like that of *Godiva*; a rustic idyl, like *The Gardener's Daughter*; a modern story, like *Dora*; or a Middle-age legend, like *The Beggar Maid*, — there permeates all his verse a reverence for womanhood and purity and nobility of principle which is characteristic of all his work and

all his moods. This is one reason why women love Tennyson's poetry; for women are quicker than men to appreciate the pure and the true in literature. It is to Tennyson more than to any other man that we owe the elevation and purity of most of the public utterances of the nineteenth century. He, more than any living writer, has both influenced and been influenced by his time. He is intensely modern. He is of the Victorian age as Shakspeare was of the Elizabethan age. In truth, as Ben Jonson and Shakspeare were representative of the spirit of their time, so Tennyson is the exponent of his. When he is highest, he is a leader; when lowest, a follower. He is reverential to Christianity; in the case of his most important work, *The Idyls of the King*, he is almost Catholic in his spirit; but still "all his mind is clouded with a doubt."

197. "**In Memoriam.**" — Tennyson's doubt is evident even in that solemn and tender dirge, *In Memoriam*, which formed his fifth volume, published a year after *The Princess*, in 1850. The Greek poet, Moschus, wrote an elegy on his friend Bion, and the refrain of this elegy, "Begin, Sicilian Muses, begin the lament," is famous. Tennyson, this modern poet, possessed of the Greek passion for symmetry and influenced as much by Theocritus, Moschus, and Bion as by the spirit of his own time, has made an elegy on his friend as solemn, as stately, as perfect in its form as that of Moschus; but not so

spontaneous and tender. It is not a poem of Faith, nor is it a poem of doubt; but Faith and doubt tread in each other's footsteps. Instead of the divine certitude of Dante, we have a doubting half-belief. Tennyson loves the village church, the holly-wreathed baptismal font, the peaceful vicarage garden, the comfortable vicar, because they represent serenity and order. He detests revolution. If he lived, before the coming of Christ, in the vales of Sicily, he would probably have hated to see the rural sports of the pagans disturbed by the disciples of a less picturesque and natural religion. His belief is summed up in these words (LIV.):

“Behold, we know not anything;  
I can but trust that good shall fall  
At last — far off — at last, to all,  
And every winter change to spring.

“So runs my dream : but what am I ?  
An infant crying in the night :  
An infant crying for the light :  
And with no language but a cry.”

He believes in the immortality of the soul, and yet — to use again the words he puts into the mouth of his own King Arthur — “all his mind is clouded with a doubt.” He says (XXXIV.):

“My own dim life should teach me this,  
That life shall live for evermore ;  
Else earth is darkness at the core,  
And dust and ashes all that is;

“ This round of green, this orb of flame,  
    Fantastic beauty; such as lurks  
    In some wild poet, when he works  
    Without a conscience or an aim.

“ What then were God to such as I ?  
    ’T were hardly worth my while to choose  
    Of things all mortal, or to use  
    A little patience ere I die ;

“ ’T were best at once to sink to peace,  
    Like birds the charming serpent draws,  
    To drop head foremost in the jaws  
    Of vacant darkness and to cease.”

But he is possessed by the restlessness of our time. He does not proclaim aloud that Christ lives; he looks on the faith of his sister with reverence, but he does not participate in it; his highest hope is that a new time will bring the faith that comes of self-control and that the “Christ that is to be” will come with the new year. To be frank, the Christianity of Tennyson seems to be little more tangible than the religion of George Eliot. He seems to hold that Christianity is good so far because no philosopher can offer the world anything better. Between the burning faith of Dante and the languid sympathy of Tennyson, the gulf is great. So much for the most noble elegy of our century, which needs only a touch of the faith and fire of Dante to make it the grandest elegy of all time. Arthur Hallam, the subject of the *In Memoriam*, had been Tennyson’s dearest friend; he was engaged to marry the poet’s sister.



“He was,” Tennyson himself said, in later years, “as perfect as mortal man could be.” *In Memoriam* was a sincere tribute of love and genius to goodness and talent. Regret as we may the absence of that Christian certitude which can alone point upward unerringly from the mists of doubt, yet we must rejoice that the nineteenth century brought forth from the chaos of Byronic utterances and the pretty rhetorical paper-flower gardens of Rogers and Campbell a poem so pure in spirit and so pure in form.

198. **Tennyson's Lyrics.** — Before considering *The Idyls of the King*, that grand and exquisite epic, which combines the ideal of Christian chivalry with the perfection of modern expression, I must call your attention to Tennyson's lyrics, especially to the little songs scattered through *The Princess*. There is one lyric, not in *The Princess*, which must live forever. And when you ask “Why?” I can only say it is *poetry*. No man has ever yet exactly defined what poetry is. But if any man should ask for illustrations of the most evanescent quality in poetry — that quality which is utterly incapable of being defined, one might point to the *Break, Break, Break*, of Tennyson and Longfellow's *Rainy Day*. Tennyson's expression of the inexpressible — Tennyson's crystallization of a mood — is perfect.

“Break, break, break,  
On thy cold, gray stones, O Sea,  
And would that my tongue could utter  
The thoughts that arise in me.

“O well for the fisherman’s boy,  
 That he shouts with his sister at play,  
 O well for the sailor lad,  
 That he sings in his boat on the bay !

“And the stately ships go on  
 To their haven under the hill ;  
 But O for the touch of a vanished hand,  
 And the sound of a voice that is still !

“Break, break, break,  
 At the foot of thy crags, O Sea,  
 But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
 Will never come back to me.”

199. **Tennyson’s Epic.** — We owe *The Idyls of the King* to the fact that Alfred Tennyson read and pondered over Sir Thomas Malory’s old black-letter legends of King Arthur’s Round Table. Here he found the story of his epic ready-made. In the form he adopted, we find the influence of Theocritus, who seems, of all poets who wrote in Greek, to have most influenced him. The title of his epic poem Tennyson took from Theocritus. The Idyls of Theocritus are short pastoral poems, full of sweetness, tenderness, and love of rural life. In these qualities, Theocritus and Tennyson are much in sympathy. Theocritus was born about two hundred and eighty-four years before the birth of Our Lord. His songs are of Sicilian woods and nightingales, of the musical contests of shepherds. In Tennyson’s *Ænone*, we find many traces of Theocritus, even paraphrases on him. *Godiva* is formed on an idyl of Theocritus,

and his famous lullaby is suggested by Theocritus' song of Alcmena over the infant Hercules.

Carlyle did not approve of Tennyson's reflections of the Greek. And he expressed it in his pleasant way — "See him on a dust-hill surrounded by innumerable dead dogs." The term "Idyl," though applicable enough to the light and pastoral poems of Theocritus was hardly so appropriate to the various parts of the Arthurian epic. But Tennyson has made the title his own; we love *The Idyls of the King* by the name he has re-created for them.

The *Idyls* are now complete. Though scattered through several volumes, we now have them arranged in good editions in logical sequence. They follow each other in this order: *The Coming of Arthur*, *Gareth and Lynette*, *Enid*, *Balin and Balan*, *Vivien*, *Elaine*, *The Holy Grail*, *Pelleas and Ettarre*, *The Last Tournament*, *Guinevere*, and *The Passing of Arthur*.

200. **The Allegory in the "Idyls."** — The *Idyls of the King* is an allegory, as well as an epic. It carries a great moral lesson. It is an epic of a failure, — a failure which falls on King Arthur and his knights because of the sin that crept among them like a serpent and left its trail over all. Arthur, the ideal king, the chivalrous servant of Christ, seems to represent the spiritual life. His queen Guinevere is "sense at war with soul." She loves the things of earth better than those of heaven.

And from her betrayal of the King — her fall, like that of *The Lady of Shalott* — her sinful love for Sir Lancelot, who represents the pride of the flesh — flow all the many evils that fall on the court of King Arthur. It is true that the allegorical meaning in some of the Idyls is dimmer than in others. Sometimes it seems to disappear altogether.<sup>1</sup>

*The Coming of Arthur* is the first Idyl. King Arthur seems to typify the soul. There is a dispute about Arthur. The King Leodogran will not give Arthur, the knight who has saved him, his daughter Guinevere, until he is satisfied about Arthur's birth. Some say he came from heaven, others that he was even as the earth. So men have disputed over the origin of the soul. There is no soul, some say — no spiritual life. But Queen Bellicent cries out, describing the scene of Arthur's coronation (*The Coming of Arthur*) —

“ But when he spake and cheered his Table Round  
 With large, divine, and comfortable words  
 Beyond my tongue to tell thee — I beheld  
 From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash  
 A momentary likeness of the King:  
 And ere it left their faces, thro' the cross  
 And those around it and the Crucified,

“ Down from the casement over Arthur smote  
 Flame-color vert, and azure in three rays  
 One falling upon each of the three fair queens,

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Condé B. Pallen's article in *The Catholic World* and *Studies in the Idyls* by Henry Elsdale.

Who stood in silence near the throne, the friends  
Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright  
Sweet faces who will help him at his need."

201. **The Symbol of the Church.** — The Lady of the Lake is there, too, "clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful" — "a mist of incense curled about her." The three Queens are Faith, Hope, and Charity, on whom the colors symbolical of them, — flame-color, blue and green — fall from the crucifix in the stained glass of the casement — the crucifix being the source of all grace. There is no doubt that Arthur represents the spiritual soldier sent by Our Lord to conquer the unbelievers and make clean the land. The Lady of the Lake — the Church — gives him the sword Excalibur, which comes from the serene depth of an untroubled lake.

Merlin, the sage and magician, is human reason without grace, strong, quick to see, failing of being omnipotent because it lacks Faith. In a later Idyl, *Merlin and Vivien*, we see the grave sage who relies on the proud power of his intellect ruined by his weakness when approached by the temptations of sensuousness. The lesson of *Vivien* is that reason and the highest culture, of themselves, are not proof against corruption.

202. **The Meaning of Merlin.** — When the question is put to Merlin whether King Arthur was sent from Heaven or not, he answers, as human culture too often does as to the origin of the soul, by a riddle. He says (*The Coming of Arthur*) —

“ Rain, rain, and sun ! a rainbow in the sky !  
 A young man will be wiser by and by.  
 An old man’s wit may wander ere he die.

“ Rain, rain, and sun ! a rainbow on the lea !  
 And truth is this to me and that to thee ;  
 And truth, or clothed, or naked, let it be.

“ Rain, sun, and rain ! And the free blossom blows !  
 Sun, rain, and sun, and where is he who knows ?  
 From the great deep to the great deep he goes ! ”

This is the answer of modern skepticism to the questions of the soul. “ Rain, sun, and rain ! ” he says. They exist because we see them. But, after all, it makes no difference whether you believe that there is beauty in Heaven or no Heaven at all — only the earth. Truth is only a mirage — a delusion of the senses and the elements — whether it seems of earthly or of heavenly origin. A young man will find this out by and by, though the old man’s wits may wander and he may take visions for realities.

“ From the great deep to the great deep he goes.”

This is Herbert Spencer’s answer to *The Unknowable*. And Pilate’s doubt, *What is truth ?* finds its echo in Merlin’s cynical phrase, —

“ And truth is this to me and that to thee.”

The first Idyl has this line : —

“ The first night, the night of the new year,  
 Was Arthur born.”

Let us observe, too, that King Arthur and Guinevere were married in May; for, through all the Idyls, the unity of time is carefully observed. The time in *Gareth and Lynette*, the second Idyl, is the late spring or early spring or early summer.

“For it was the time of Easter Day.”

And Lynette says:—

“Good Lord, how sweetly smells the honeysuckle in the hushed night.”

203. **The Lessons of the “Idyls.”**—*Gareth and Lynette* is full of symbolism. Again, the Church appears more strongly symbolized. Gareth represents the strength of manhood, the Lady Lyonors the spirit, and Lynette imagination. I would advise you to analyze this poem more closely.

Next comes *Geraint and Enid*—most lovely study of wifely graciousness and patience. Guinevere’s sin has begun to work horrible evil unconscious to herself. It plants suspicion in Geraint’s mind and causes Enid to suffer intolerably. The time is still in the summer.

I have alluded to the lesson of *Vivien*. *Balin and Balan* precedes it with the same lesson. We shall pass *Merlin and Vivien*. The time is still summer, and a summer thunder storm breaks as Reason (Merlin) falls a prey to the seduction of Sensuality (Vivien).

*Elaine* follows. It is now midsummer. Guine-

vere and Lancelot begin to suffer for having betrayed the blameless King. Elaine is "the lily maid of Astolat." Elaine has the charm of a wood-faun — the purity of dew on a lily. But she, too, must die, because of the sin of Guinevere and Lancelot, and because of her own wilfulness in loving Lancelot in spite of all. Is there anywhere in poetry a more pathetic, more beautiful picture than that of the "dead steered by the dumb" floating past the Castle of Camelot when the Queen had learned that the fairest and richest of jewels are worse than dust when bought by sin. And Elaine —

"In her right hand the lily, in her left  
The letter — all her bright hair streaming down,  
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold  
Down to her waist, and she herself in white,  
All but her face, and that clear-featured face  
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,  
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled."

204. "The Holy Grail" (*Lancelot and Elaine*) can have its full significance to Catholics alone. The time of *The Holy Grail* is still summer. In *Pelleas and Ettarre*, we see again the growing evil worked by sin in King Arthur's plans for making the kingdom of Christ on earth. Sin grows and Faith fails; the strong become weak. Sir Galahad's strength is "as the strength of ten because his heart is pure." The late summer is indicated by the "silent, seeded meadow grass." In the next



Idyl, *The Last Tournament*, when ruin begins to fall, the gloom of autumn lowers, and we read of the “faded fields” and “yellowing woods.” In *Guinevere*, when the doom of sin falls on all the court, it is dreary winter.

“The white mist like a face cloth to the face,  
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.”

In the last of the Idyls, in *The Passing of Arthur*, we are in December, at its close, —

“And the new sun rose, bringing the new year.”

205. **A Homeric Fragment.** — The splendid and blameless King lies by “the winter sea,” defeated, helpless — his Queen gone, his knights routed, his hopes fallen. Only Sir Bedivere, who seems to represent neither high Faith nor materialism, but something between the two — is with him. At last, Sir Bedivere obeys and casts away the mystic blade, Excalibur. King Arthur, close by the “broken chancel with the broken cross,” speaks the most solemn, most marvellous speech in this greatest of the Idyls — in which Tennyson the exquisite becomes Tennyson the sublime, —

“And slowly answered Arthur from the barge :  
‘The old order changeth, giving place to new,  
And God fulfils Himself in many ways  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.  
Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?  
I have lived my life, and that which I have done  
May He within Himself make pure ! but thou,

If thou shouldst never see my face again,  
 Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer  
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice  
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
 For what are men better than sheep or goats  
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
 If knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
 Both for themselves and those that call them friend ?  
 For so the whole, round earth is every way  
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.  
 But now farewell.' "

The three Queens, gold-crowned clothed in black, sail away with the blameless King in the barge, "dark as a funeral scarf,"—and he is seen no more.

206. **His Latest Poems.** — *Demeter and Other Poems* was printed in December, 1889. It showed no falling off in power. It contains one of the sweetest and most pathetic of all Tennyson's lyrics — a lyric which bears comparison with *Break, Break, Break*. This is *Crossing the Bar*. It ends with an *In Memoriam*, written on the death of that stanch Catholic and defender of the Faith, W. G. Ward. Tennyson died October 9, 1892.

## CHAPTER XV

*The Religious Poets. — The Pre-Raphaelites. — The Lighter Poets. — Sir Edwin Arnold, Lewis Morris, and Others*

207. **The movements in men's minds** are reflected in literature. In France, Victor Hugo was the most prominent of French writers to depart from the traditions of the classic drama and go to the Middle Ages for strange adventures and blood-curdling crimes. Goethe in Germany was followed by Sir Walter Scott in Great Britain. It is hard to define the terms *classic* and *romantic*. The classic school follows carefully-set rules of composition, and is governed by great regard for form. The romantic seizes on any subject that may be made effective, and treats it as it pleases. In a classic drama the plot is everything; in a romantic, the development of character by episodes or the expression of feeling is all.

The tendency to the romantic, in which Sir Walter Scott was the leader in English literature helped to produce two remarkable movements. One was the longing to look backward to the Middle Ages, which

helped the religious revival in England; the other, the tendency to give a strange, new color even to old stories, and to see all things, as it were, through flame-colored glasses. Cardinal Newman, Father Faber, and the Reverend Mr. Keble were the most powerful of the religious poets. And Cardinal Newman never loses a chance of acknowledging the influence of Sir Walter Scott's novels upon him. The poems of Sir Walter are romantic in feeling, but classical in expression.

In the next chapter you will find Cardinal Newman considered as a prose writer. Here I shall speak of him as a poet, and as the greatest of that school of poets which more than revived the traditions of Southwell, Crashaw, Habington, and Herbert.

208. **John Henry Newman (1801–1890)** was a poet as well as the greatest master of English prose. In 1816 he entered Trinity College, Oxford, was graduated in 1820, and elected a Fellow of Oriel College in 1822. All this implied high talent and hard work on his part. He began to long for something more satisfactory than mere intellectual success; he found that his desire for the truth and his researches led him nearer and nearer to the Catholic Church. He became the leader of the most brilliant group of young men in Great Britain, who began to see that the Church of England was not a continuation of the Catholic Church, and that

Henry VIII. and the Reformers had come “destroy, not to fulfil.” Newman, Keble, Froude, and Pusey were conspicuous in the Tractarian Movement, so called because they wrote a series of *Tracts for the Times*. Tract XC., written by Newman, brought matters to a climax. He — being a clergyman of the Church of England — resigned his living, and, in 1845, was admitted into the Catholic Church. He received Holy Orders, founded the Oratory of St. Philip de Neri at Brompton, and from 1854 to '58 was rector of the Catholic University at Dublin. In 1877 he was made honorary fellow of his old university, and created Cardinal Deacon by the Holy Father, Leo XIII., in 1879. His chief poem is *The Dream of Gerontius*; his most popular poem, *Lead, Kindly Light*. The latter was written when he was about to make what to him was a terrible change — from opinion to faith. The circumstances are related by himself in his book, *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. He was one of the contributors to the *Lyra Apostolica*. He published *Verses on Religious Subjects* and *Verses on Various Occasions*.

*Lead Kindly Light* — sometimes entitled *The Pillar of the Cloud* — consists of only three stanzas:—

“Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
     Lead Thou me on!  
 The night is dark, and I am far from home —  
     Lead Thou me on!  
 Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
 The distant scene, — one step enough for me.

“ I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou  
     Shouldst lead me on,  
 I loved to choose and see my path — but now  
     Lead Thou me on !  
 I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,  
 Pride ruled my will : remember not past years.

“ So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still  
     Will lead me on,  
 O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till  
     The night is gone ;  
 And with the morn those angel faces smile  
 Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.”

*The Dream of Gerontius* is one of the most remarkable poems of the nineteenth century. It is not an imitation of any other; it has not been imitated. It may be grouped with three other poems of various degrees of merit — Dante's *Divina Commedia*, parts of *Paradise Lost*, and *The Blessed Damozel*. These all tell of the life after death. Gerontius, the hero of Newman's poem, leaves the earth and his body and ascends to Heaven. The departing soul is seized with nameless terror, but the prayers for the dead give it strength and help to bear it upwards. It is a noble conception; it appeals to all Christians, but especially to Catholics. It is a masterpiece of literary art; it approaches the sublime, and yet it is tenderly human. Newman's object in life and in the poetical expression of his life was to know God and to love Him. He says :

“ Let others seek earth's honors ; be it mine  
 One law to cherish and to teach one line —

Straight on towards Heaven to press with single bent,  
To know and love my God, and then to die content."

209. **Frederick William Faber (1814–1863)** was, like Newman, a graduate of Oxford. He was greatly influenced by the Tractarian Movement and Newman. He was received into the Church in 1845, and later joined the Oratory of St. Philip de Neri. His *Shadow of the Rock* and *Hymns* contain tender and elevated poetry. His poem, *The Right Must Win*, is the best known of his verses, —

“For right is right, since God is God,  
And right the day must win.  
To doubt would be disloyalty,  
To falter would be sin.”

*Perfection* and *The Pilgrims of the Night* are likewise often quoted. Father Faber's sweetness and sympathy are quite as evident in his prose works as in his poems, as his famous *All for Jesus* testifies.

210. **Of the Religious Poets**, the Reverend Mr. Keble — who, like Dr. Pusey, followed the “kindly light” only a certain distance — is very popular. His *Christian Year* is full of high thought and devout sentiment, but it never reaches the elevation of Newman or Faber. Horatius Bonar's *A Little While* is well known, —

“Beyond the smiling and the weeping,  
I shall be soon ;  
Beyond the waking and the sleeping,  
Beyond the sowing and the reaping,

I shall be soon.  
Love, rest, and home,  
Sweet hope!  
Lord, tarry not, but come."

Adelaide Anne Procter (1825–1864) may be included among the religious poets. She was the daughter of Bryan Waller Procter (Barry Cornwall), and received her first encouragement from Charles Dickens, her father's friend; he did not know who "Miss Mary Berwick," his contributor to *Household Words*, was, until he found it out by chance. After her conversion she wrote many devotional poems; but the best remembered and most often quoted of her verses are *A Woman's Question* and *The Lost Chord*. Miss Procter has something of the spirit of Longfellow. There are few households that have not learned to love them.

Archbishop Trench's religious poems deserve a high rank; they are so melodious, and so intensely devotional that one cannot help wondering why he did not follow Newman and Faber.

211. **The Pre-Raphaelite Movement** in England was based on a theory it is hard to define. John Ruskin tried to explain its relations to art, but he did not succeed. He makes it to mean in painting, a revolt against meaningless forms and a return to the sincere study of nature. It does not mean the same thing in poetry; for the Pre-Raphaelites are artificial and often unnatural. In fact, they do not aim to be nat-



ural; they want to be *intense*. They see all things in a fiery and splendid light. Mr. Walter Pater, describing the poems of the chief of the Pre-Raphaelites, William Morris, says of the characteristics of this school: "He has diffused through *King Arthur's Tomb* the maddening white glare of the sun and tyranny of the moon, not tender and far off, but close down—the sorcerer's moon, large and feverish. The coloring is intricate and delirious, as of 'scarlet lilies.' The influence of summer is like poison in one's blood, with a sudden, bewildered sickening of life and all things." *The Earthly Paradise*, by William Morris, is the most characteristic work of this school. It introduced a new flavor into English literature; it took the reader into a strange, weird atmosphere, which was dreamlike and not entirely wholesome. In truth, all these Pre-Raphaelites take us into golden rooms lined with exotic plants, but which need pure air. Mr. Morris, besides being a poet of genius, was a manufacturer of household decorations, a novelist, and a Socialist.

212. **Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882)** was the son of a famous Italian scholar, a resident of London. He was a Pre-Raphaelite artist as well as a Pre-Raphaelite poet. He seems to have led a singular and unhealthy life. He was not a Catholic in belief, though the æsthetics of religion colored his painting and verse, — but always with a certain exaggeration. His most important work is *Dante*

and his *Circle*; his best known and his most remarkable poem, *The Blessed Damozel*, which is one of the most striking examples of the intense manner of the Pre-Raphaelite school:—

“The Blessed Damozel leaned out  
 From the gold bar of Heaven;  
 Her eyes were deeper than the depth  
 Of waters stilled at even;  
 She had three lilies in her hand,  
 And the stars in her hair were seven.”

Rossetti was more Italian than English in feeling; he imitated the poets contemporary with Dante. He is picturesque, musical, overstrained. His *Ave* is a fine poem, above all, intense. It is a tribute to the Blessed Virgin.

“Mother of the Fair Delight,  
 Thou handmaid perfect in God’s sight,  
 Now sitting fourth beside the Three,  
 Thyself a woman-Trinity —  
 Being a daughter born to God,  
 Mother of Christ from stall to rood,  
 And wife unto the Holy Ghost:—  
 Oh, when our need is uttermost,  
 Think that to such as death may strike  
 Thou once wert sister, sisterlike!  
 Thou headstone of humanity,  
 Groundstone of the great Mystery,  
 Fashioned like us, yet more than we!”

Yet, intensely beautiful as some of Rossetti’s poems are, one often feels as if a heavy scent were mingled

with the odor of his lilies. A poet somewhat influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites was the Irish poet, William Allingham. Purity, melody, and truth of feeling are his characteristics. *Lovely Mary Donnelly* and *The Fairies* are very dear to all lovers of poetry. Every child ought to know *The Fairies* which is not at all Pre-Raphaelite.

“Up the airy mountain,  
Down the rushy glen,  
We dare n't go a-hunting,  
For fear of little men —

“Wee folk, good folk,  
Trooping all together;  
Green jacket, red cap,  
And white owl's feather.”

Among the Pre-Raphaelites we may include Richard Watson Dixon, author of *Mano*, and Thomas Woolner, author of *Pygmalion*. Katharine Tynan (Mrs. Hinkson), whose poems are very beautiful, has been influenced by them.

213. **Algernon Charles Swinburne**, though not generally counted among the Pre-Raphaelites, has a great deal of that over-intensity and exaggeration of emotion and expression which characterize them. He was born in 1837. He is the greatest master of English rhythm. His art is not so perfect as Tennyson's: he indulges in alliteration with finer effect than any other poet, but he makes words

repeated and diluted do for thoughts ; his exaggeration of epithets and his straining after intensity are more unpleasant than Rossetti's. He is more pagan than the most pagan of the old Greeks, in the morals of his poems, and hence he is not read and admired as much as he might have been. The most beautiful of all he has written is *Atalanta in Calydon*. The chorus is a masterpiece of music and poetry : —

“ When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,  
The mother of months in meadow or plain  
Fills the shadows and windy places  
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain.”

One of the saddest things in modern literature is the sight of this poet with a divine gift dissolving his pearls in acid for swine to drink.

214. **The Writers of Vers de Société**, a light and airy species of verse, have attained wonderful delicacy and daintiness. Calverly, the author of *Fly-leaves*, was once very popular ; but Austin Dobson and Andrew Lang brought the art of writing exquisite verses to a perfection only found in France in the eighteenth century. They naturalized in English the French forms of the *rondeau* and the *ballade*. In their hands these forms of verse, as a rule, fit only to practise with, become works of art. The manner and the measure are easily seen in this example of the *rondeau* by Austin Dobson.

“ With pipe and flute the rustic Pan  
 Of old made music sweet for man;  
     And wonder hushed the warbling bird  
     And closer drew the calm-eyed herd,  
 The rolling river slower ran.

“ Ah, would — ah, would, a little span,  
 Some air of Arcady would fan  
     This age of care, too seldom stirred  
     With pipe and flute !

“ But now for gold we plot and plan;  
 And from Beersheba unto Dan  
     Apollo’s self might pass unheard,  
     Or find the night-jar’s note preferred —  
 Not so it fared, when time began,  
     With pipe and flute ! ”

Mr. Dobson’s *Proverbs in Porcelain* and *At the Sign of the Lyre* contain some of his best work.

215. **Andrew Lang** is a master of the *ballade*. He has printed several books, among which *Ballades in Blue China* is well known. Nothing that he has done equals Dobson’s sweet dialogue, *Good Night, Babette*; but he is a truly exquisite artist in words. The *ballade* consists of three stanzas and what is called the “envoy.” Each stanza has eight lines made on three rhymes; for instance —

“ . . . . . cark,  
   . . . . . new,  
   . . . . . mark,  
   . . . . . blue,  
   . . . . . through,  
   . . . . . rang,  
   . . . . . hue,  
   . . . . . Emperor Whang.”

These three sounds are repeated through the next two stanzas, the "envoy" consisting of four lines answering in rhyme to the second four of the third stanza, as —

"Come, snarl at my ecstasies, do,  
 Kind critic! — your 'tongue has a tang;'   
 But — a sage never heeded a shrew  
 In the reign of the Emperor Whang."

The "envoy" is always addressed to some person. In this *ballade* it is the critics of blue china; in most old *ballades* it is a prince. Frederick Locker-Lampson was another of these dainty poets. His *To My Grandmother* makes a lovely companion piece to our own Oliver Wendell Holmes' *The Last Leaf*.

Among poets of great talent now dead (1901) may be mentioned James Clarence Mangan (1803–1849), whose *Dark Rosaleen* is a masterpiece of true poetry, Philip James Bailey, the author of *Festus*, Leigh Hunt (1784–1859), Jean Ingelow (1830–1897), Arthur O'Shaughnessy, Matthew Arnold, whose reputation as a poet still grows, George Eliot, author of *The Spanish Gypsy*, Francis Turner Palgrave, Dennis Florence MacCarthy, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Gerald Griffin, Bryan W. Procter, William Barnes, Thomas Davis, Owen Meredith, author of *Lucille* and son of the first Lord Lytton, who wrote *The Last Days of Pompeii*, Christina Rossetti, sister of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Robert

Louis Stevenson and Coventry Patmore, whose odes are among the most beautiful in our language.

Among the living are Lewis Morris, Alfred Austin, the present laureate, Francis Thompson, Mrs. Meynell, P. A. Sheehan, author of *Cithara Mea*, Edmund Gosse, George Meredith, Rudyard Kipling, Thomas Hardy, William Watson, Stephen Phillips, author of *Herod*, and others whose names will be found in more detailed books on literature.

Sir Edwin Arnold, author of *The Light of Asia* (1876) and *The Light of the World* (1892), attempted to adorn the selfish beliefs and practices of Buddhism with the borrowed splendor of Christianity. In *The Light of the World* he tries as hard to show the beauties of Christianity as he did to bedeck Buddhism and Mohammedanism. There are fine passages in *The Light of the World*. Sir Edwin's reputation seems to be founded on the fact that he introduced a "new flavor into modern literature."

Students of literature will do well to read Sir Aubrey de Vere's tragedy *Mary Tudor* and Sir Henry Taylor's *Philip Van Artevelde*, both great dramatic poems.

## CHAPTER XVI

*Modern Prose. — Burke. — Ruskin. — Carlyle. —  
Macaulay. — De Quincey. — Newman*

217. **English Literature** is rich in prose. We talk in prose and write in prose every day, but we do not often stop to consider the writers who have taught our predecessors how to speak and write good prose. The language we speak was made by great writers. We can scarcely utter ten sentences of good English without quoting from the makers of the English language. Although English literature is rich in prose, its prose is not equal to its poetry, nor equal to the perfect prose of the French. Cardinal Newman was the chief of English prose writers. To him and to Tennyson we owe the tendency towards plain Saxon words which is characteristic of the best modern English prose. His contemporary, Cardinal Wiseman, though he wrote a masterpiece of fiction, *Fabiola*, and many other admirable works, was not an eminent master of prose.

The two greatest of the modern writers of English rhetorical prose were Burke and Macaulay. By



rhetorical prose I mean that kind of writing in which the emotional and æsthetic qualities predominate. The intellectual quality of style is clearness; the emotional, force; and the æsthetic, elegance. In Burke's and Macaulay's writings we cannot help seeing that the ornaments of style are subjects of deep thought, and that sometimes they put the ornament above the thought. In Newman's prose the intellectual quality predominates; in De Quincey's, the æsthetic; in Ruskin's, the emotional. But in Ruskin's style the ornaments are not merely for ornament's sake; they arise from the subject, and are almost too poetical for prose. The reader might see the description of St. Mark's at Venice, in the *Stones of Venice*, as a good example of this poetic quality.

218. **Edmund Burke** was born at Arran Quay, Dublin, January 12, 1728, and died in 1797. His mother, who had been a Miss Nagle, was a Catholic. At Trinity College, Dublin, where Goldsmith and he were together, he did not attain high honors. His biographers tell us that he spent his term in reading without a purpose; he studied law, but he was fonder of literature. His early training among people of various creeds, and the fact that his immediate paternal ancestors and his mother were Catholics, helped to make him very tolerant. We see this in all his later political speeches and actions. He was the greatest orator of his time and one of

the most forcible writers. The emotional quality of force is the chief characteristic of his style. He was a rhetorician, and the desire to use strong and picturesque expressions sometimes carried him beyond accuracy. Burke's and Goldsmith's writings ought to be interesting studies to the young. There can be no doubt that Goldsmith's style is more worthy of imitation than Burke's. Burke was by nature an orator; he had a rich vocabulary and the art of repeating his argument in many new ways. A competent critic says that Burke was one of the few men who almost attained a perfect command of the English language; but he was fond of Latinized words. He knew the art of being forcible; he seldom attained the higher art of simplicity. Burke and Macaulay have much in common. They were both rhetorical; and Burke, though his imagination often led him to extravagances, was more earnest than the historian. The famous passage beginning "The age of chivalry is gone," in his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, is a good example of the characteristics of Burke's style; and his idea that a man, to love his country, ought to have a lovely country to love, is an example of that fondness for effective expressions without regard to exact meaning so often characteristic of the rhetorical writer. Patriotism means that we shall love our country whether it be lovely or not. As a statesman he would have been admirable had the Holy Father, in

the eighteenth century, been still the acknowledged arbitrator among nations. He longed for such an arbitrator, and talked as if one really existed. His *Vindication of Natural Society* (1756) is an imitation of Bolingbroke. His *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*, his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, and his speech against Warren Hastings are remarkable. He was a friend to American freedom. He died at his estate of Beaconsfield. If his son had lived, he would probably have been made a peer, with that title which Benjamin Disraeli — another rhetorician, but without Burke's earnestness or force — afterwards bore.

219. **Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin** are two names which the student of prose literature puts together as he does those of Burke and Macaulay. Style is not only the expression of thought, but the expression of temperament. And both these writers express very plainly their temperaments as well as their thoughts. Carlyle's impatience, impetuosity, and love of German forms of expression are evident through all his work. He believed that he was a man with a mission; he built a wonderfully ornamented staircase to Heaven, and found when he looked about him from the topmost landing that his eyes were blinded by the clouds. He was born in 1795; he died in 1880. His early education among people who cultivated high thoughts in poverty was an advantage to him; but the inconsistencies of

the Scotch form of Presbyterianism caused him to form a philosophy of his own which took, in an unsatisfactory way the place of religion. He tried to believe that the true literary man was God's priest; he preaches the gospel of work, with the idea that men must do something, no matter what. He adored mere strength. His prose is forcible and picturesque; his imitation of the German style — which he only caricatured — became second nature. He was filled with mistaken opinions about the Church, though he admitted once that "the Mass was the only genuine thing of our time." He hated what he thought was false, but his horror of shams became a disease, like Thackeray's morbid dislike for snobs. Carlyle saw shams everywhere, and Thackeray concluded that nearly everybody was a snob, including himself. A good contrast to the style of Carlyle is the admirably easy, graceful manner of Thackeray. Carlyle's early struggles and his dyspepsia soured a disposition not naturally cheerful. His clever wife, Jane Welsh Carlyle, has left her own record of this fact. He was a man of genius, without religious or ethical direction. His own description of the agony he suffered when the *French Revolution* was thrown into the fire by mistake and he had to write it again shows how strong and persevering the man was. The *French Revolution* is not a history; it is a series of pictures, more or less accurate, painted in vivid colors. His im-

portant works are, after the *French Revolution*, *Sartor Resartus*, *Life of Frederick the Great*, and *Cromwell*. As an example of his style, the death of Mirabeau, in the *French Revolution*, will serve. It is plain that he applied his own gospel of work to his books; *Frederick* and the *French Revolution* show immense research and labor.

220. **John Ruskin (1819–1900)** was brought up under strong religious influences. He was fond of the beauties of nature, and learned to appreciate them in his earliest youth. He was educated at Oxford, and chose art for his object in life rather than for his profession. He has expressed the art of painting in words rather than in lines or colors. He is an artist, nevertheless; but he is famous as a critic of art and as the writer of the most poetical prose in the English language. He has written at least forty books on many subjects. His most important work is *Modern Painters*. His poems are inferior to his prose; into this prose he pours a wealth of poetic epithet. Let the student analyze the description of St. Mark's at Venice, and note such poetic expressions as "melancholy gold." Ruskin, who was a friend of Carlyle's, is equally earnest in his belief that he has a mission. Carlyle's mottoes were power and strength; Ruskin's, sincerity and beauty. Ruskin has no patience with the ugly. In *Modern Painters*, the *Stones of Venice*, and in all his books he goes back to the art which

the Church created and preserved, and yet he loses no chance of finding fault with the Church itself. Like Longfellow, like Hawthorne, like Tennyson, like Byron, he is drawn involuntarily towards the beauty of the Spouse of Christ. A parallel between Ruskin's state of mind and Hawthorne's may easily be made by comparing certain passages in *The Marble Faun* with passages scattered through Ruskin's works. Carlyle and Ruskin are the most picturesque of modern prose writers. Ruskin's books for young people are *The King of the Golden River* and *The Ethics of the Dust*. A censor of art, as Carlyle was a censor of morals and manners, quoted as the foremost lover of beauty of his time, Ruskin passed his later days in leisure at Brantwood, in Westmoreland. He died on January 20, 1900.

221. **Thomas Babington Macaulay** (born in 1800, died 1859) was for a long time the most popular of English prose writers. He was educated at a private school, and afterwards entered Cambridge. He took two medals for poetical composition. He was a precocious child. There is a story that when he was little he preferred to talk in polysyllables. He was hurt in some trifling way, and he replied to a kind inquirer, "Thank you, madam, the agony is abated." His fondness for Latin words is evident in his later writings. He was probably first drawn to historical studies by his desire to understand the private life of past ages. There is no more accurate

or careful historian than Dr. John Lingard. The truth of his statements — the first edition of his history was printed in 1819 — has stood the test of time. And there is no more valuable compilation of facts than Kenelm Digby's great *Mores Catholici*. But neither of these great writers had the style of Macaulay; that style has caused his history to be read everywhere; it is a popular book; while Lingard's work, the most accurate of English histories, is read only by careful students. This may be said, too, of the histories of the late Professor Freeman, who was accurate, but not a master of style, though his constant use of Saxon derivatives causes him to be clear and direct. This gentleman was Regius Professor of History at Oxford; he was succeeded by Macaulay's disciple, James Anthony Froude, who believed that history might be made by any man of literary skill. His style is more picturesque than Macaulay's; he carried the desire to "realize the private life of past ages" to such a degree that his history is mere romance.

Macaulay sacrifices truth to artificial expressions at times, but he does not intend to give false impressions. He had the art of constructing paragraphs in perfection; his sentences are so arranged that the long and short are mingled, so that variety and melody are obtained. Macaulay's style is too artificial, — more artificial even than Burke's. His essay on Milton is an example of rhetorical expression so

wild as to be luxuriantly weedy. His fame rests on his *History of England from the Accession of James II*. He made history popular; with Sir Walter Scott, he put animation in the dust of dry records and made them live. His *Lays of Ancient Rome* are versified stories, but have no claim to be considered poetry. The lives of literary men, — Johnson, Goldsmith, etc., — on which he touched in his essays, are good examples of his style at its best. Macaulay had a wonderful memory; he could quote the whole of *Paradise Lost* without an effort. He was the first man of letters to be raised to the peerage in Great Britain.

222. **Thomas De Quincey (1775–1859)** left us some of the most elegant examples of English style. He was a master of euphony in style, though he indulges too often in digressions which even his skill cannot make harmonious. He uses figures of speech profusely, but he has the art of concealing his art; he seems never to be too florid. His most popular work is *The Confessions of an Opium-eater*. This is a classic. As a work of literary art, it is exquisite; as the record of the sufferings of a human creature, the slave of a vicious habit, it is terrible. De Quincey never shook off this habit, though he at one time imagined he had done so.

His style is accurate; he has a partiality for Latin words. Professor Minto says that “De Quincey’s specialty was in describing incidents of a purely per-



sonal interest, in language suited to their magnitude as they appeared in the eyes of the writer.”<sup>1</sup> His delicate art saved him from vanity, and hence the world to-day reads and re-reads his autobiographical sketches. His famous short papers are *Murder Considered as a Fine Art*; *On the Knocking at the Door in “Macbeth”*; and *The Toilette of a Hebrew Lady*.

223. **Edward Gibbon (1737–1794)** has already been alluded to. His *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is an elaborate apology for paganism. His style is ornate, pompous, stately. Charles Lamb (Elia), the most delicate of English humorists, is all refinement; and Leigh Hunt has clearness and elegance. William Hazlitt, less humorous and graceful than Hunt, deserves to be ranked among the minor prose writers. Coleridge, like nearly all the English poets, was a strong prose writer. In Dryden’s case, for instance, his fine prose would be considered splendid if his poetry were not more splendid.

224. **John Henry Newman** may be named without fear of reasonable contradiction, as the chief of English prose writers. His style unites clearness, force, and elegance. To him more than to any other writer is due the tendency to use Saxon derivatives; his example has strengthened our language. His style is not only accurate; it is fine and subtle to a degree which redeems the English tongue from the reproach of not being a language fit for philosophy. His

<sup>1</sup> Minto’s *Manual of English Prose*.

*Apologia pro Vita Sua* is a model of simplicity. Cardinal Newman's *Idea of a University* ought to be read and re-read at least once a year by every student of literature. It will arm him with definitions; it will clarify and elevate his thoughts and stimulate him to the exact expression of them.

225. **Walter Pater (1839–1894)**, author of *Marius the Epicurean*, **Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894)**, author of *Memories and Portraits*, **Augustine Birrell**, author of *Obiter Dicta* may be mentioned as writers whose styles are both careful and polished. **Mrs. Meynell** has acquired a peculiarly exquisite style. **W. S. Lilly** and **W. H. Mallock** are ranked high among English prose writers.

## CHAPTER XVII

*The Novel as a Form of Literary Expression.—The Novels of Shakspeare's Time.—Richardson to Father Sheehan. (1740 to 1901.)*

226. **The Novel** is the most popular form of literary expression of our time. Literary forms change as men change. King Solomon put into proverb the wisdom which Shakspeare recognized and made into plays. The epic poem gave place to the drama, and now the novel has succeeded not only the epic, but the drama; and even the poetical satire so much admired in the reign of the Emperor Augustus and in that of Queen Anne, has given place to the romance and the novel.

227. **The Romance** is a different thing from the novel. People have always liked to hear stories. God Himself spoke great truths in the most simple and beautiful stories, which, in the New Testament, are preserved for us. It is probable that the story will hold its own until the end of the world. The romance is a tale which depends on incident, while the novel is built on the development of character.

Sir Walter Scott's *Monastery* is a romance, Miss Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, a novel. It has often been said that in a romance the story is impressed on our memory, in a novel the characters. This is not entirely true. In *Ivanhoe* and in *Guy Mannerling* we remember characters and incidents, too. But Sir Walter Scott's prose fiction has other claims to be called romance. The author often goes to the Middle Ages for his material and introduces the supernatural; *The Monastery*, which has some spots of bigotry upon it, but which is redeemed by *The Abbot*, is a typical romance. Thackeray's *Newcomes* is, on the other hand, a typical novel.

228. **The Nineteenth Century** has been rich in great novelists. But in Elizabeth's time, John Lyly may be said to have founded the modern novel. Sir Philip Sidney wrote a pastoral romance, *Arcadia*; Thomas Nash, picturesque stories; and Dekker, realistic scenes from life. Daniel Defoe (1719–28) followed Dekker, and gave models for modern realistic novelists.

229. **Richardson, Fielding, Smollet, Sterne, and Goldsmith** (who wrote from 1740–70) are held to be the classical English novelists. *Pamela*, by Samuel Richardson, was published in 1740. *Clarissa Harlowe* and *Sir Charles Grandison* followed. Richardson was the champion of womanhood, and he was almost adored by the fashionable women of his age. *Clarissa Harlowe* is considered to be coarse

in our time, but in 1748 it was looked upon as most refined and moral. There is no doubt that it was intended to teach the highest morality. Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) is pronounced by competent critics to be the best novel, as to plot, of the eighteenth century. Thackeray and Anthony Trollope, the author of *Barchester Towers* and *The Warden*, declared its "fable" to be almost unrivalled. It is undoubtedly a life-like picture of a coarse condition of society. We may thank heaven that "Tom Jones" is not a typical young man of our time, and that the brutal Squire Western, who begins to drink at two o'clock every day while his daughter sings until he falls into a drunken sleep, has gone out of fashion. Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* appeared in 1742. Tobias Smollett published *Roderick Random* in 1748; Smollett is coarse and he exaggerates. Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759) is highly praised. Why it is hard to say, unless it be for the vivid character drawing. Sterne is the author of the *Sentimental Journey*. He was a man, it seems, whose heart was hard, but whose eyes were always ready to drop tears.

230. Oliver Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* is a novel which will never go out of date. It is a story of simple people. Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas* appeared in 1759. In 1778, Miss Burney (afterwards Madame D'Arblay), wrote *Evelina*. Her novel *Cecilia* followed it. These were "society" novels. They

are not easy to read now because of the pompousness of their style. Mrs. Opie, Mrs. Inchbald, Sophia and Harriet Lee, and Mrs. Ratcliffe — a name which suggests dark vaults and castle spectres — need only be mentioned. Their day is past. Miss Maria Edgeworth's Irish novels, like *Castle Rackrent* and her delightful children's stories, such as those in *The Parent's Assistant*, will live (1801-11). Miss Ferrier's tales of Scottish society deserve the revival they have achieved.

231. **Miss Austen (1811-1817)**, of all English women novelists, most deserves our gratitude and appreciation. Her books are stories of character, in which the highest art seems unconscious. She takes commonplace lives and describes them. Her characters breathe. It does not seem strange that Sir Walter Scott admired her novels. He could do the "big bow-wow" business himself, but such impressions of quiet life as she gave in *Sense and Sensibility*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion* were beyond his power.

232. **The Romantic School** was represented in Germany by Goethe's poetic *Götz von Berlichingen*; in England by the novels of Sir Walter Scott, who was influenced by Goethe's romantic tendencies. In France, Victor Hugo was the leader of the romantic school. Scott's *Waverley Novels* practically created historical fiction in English. Attractive as they are, Sir Walter's novels are not always true to his-

tory, though they can hardly fail to strengthen a taste for it.

233. **Charles Dickens (1812–1870)** was one of the most imaginative of novelists. *The Pickwick Papers* (1836) made him famous. He had little education, and this he regretted throughout his life.<sup>1</sup> He had assumed as a pen-name “Boz” in some newspaper sketches, which he had written in the intervals of his work as a parliamentary reporter. He agreed to write the text for some sporting pictures. This grew, almost by accident, into the *Pickwick Papers*, whose success was assured as soon as Samuel Weller appeared. Dickens’ characters are not real, though they sometimes have the appearance of being so. His power of description and his humor almost make us forget this. When old Samuel bids young Samuel, “Beware of widders,” we are so much amused that we forget both are caricatures.

The changes in Dickens’ style are exemplified in *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Our Mutual Friend*. His style is seldom good. He forces and strains words. This overstrain reaches its worst in *Our Mutual Friend* and *Bleak House*. He is, from the point of view of literature, at his best in *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Barnaby Rudge*. His *Child’s History of England* is mischievous; his *American* and *Italian Sketches* unworthy of a cultivated man. His pathos is at its

<sup>1</sup> See Foster’s *Life of Dickens*.

best in the death of Paul Dombey, and at its worst in the death of little Nell and in some passages of *Little Dorrit*. Dickens is whimsical, grotesque, imaginative, and interesting; his motives are good and his theories optimistic and humane. His novels are of the school called in Germany the "Tendenzroman" — novels with a purpose. He held up the Yorkshire schools to scorn in *Nicholas Nickleby*, and made the English-speaking world more tender to the poor and more mindful of the feast of Christmas by his creation of *Tiny Tim*.

234. **William Makepeace Thackeray** stands at the head of all English novelists. His nearest rivals are women — Miss Austen and Marian Evans (George Eliot). It is no longer the fashion to compare Thackeray and Dickens. The place of the author of *Pendennis* has been fixed much above the author of *Pickwick*. Thackeray was born in 1811 and he died in 1863. He was college-bred, and he enjoyed a competence until he lost it by extravagance and bad investments. He fancied that he was an artist, and evidently valued some of the queer drawings with which he adorned his text more than the text itself. He began to earn a precarious living by writing for *Punch*. In 1847 he became famous through *Vanity Fair*. Thackeray had genuine humor; he detested all shams; he loved simplicity and honesty, and he had the keenest possible perception, as well as a deep heart.



235. **Lord Lytton** — at one time Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton — is best remembered by *The Last Days of Pompeii*, although *The Caxtons* and *The Parisians* are his best novels. He likewise wrote successful plays, *Richelieu*, *The Lady of Lyons*, and *Moncy*. His popular historical romances are *Rienzi*, *The Last of the Barons*, and *Harold*, — the last very false to history. Lord Lytton's son, now dead, was known as Owen Meredith, the author of *Lucile*. Thackeray did not like the very sentimental tone of Bulwer's *Eugene Aram* and other fashionable novels; so he wrote *Catherine* and *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* to parody them. But these fail beside the attempt he made in *Vanity Fair* to show that vice and virtue cannot mix, and the enormity of lying, intrigue, and selfishness. We do not hate Becky Sharp, but we abhor her sins, — it is the same with Beatrix Esmond, in the greatest of all novels, *Henry Esmond*. Thackeray never blurs the line between right and wrong; his bells always ring true. Compare for real pathos the death of Colonel Newcome, in *The Newcomes*, with the long-drawn-out agony of Dickens' *Little Nell*. *The Virginians* is a sequel to *Esmond*. George Washington is an interesting figure in it. *Pendennis*, *The Newcomes*, *Vanity Fair*, — all Thackeray's novels are examples of realism, — even *Esmond*, so true to its time, cannot be called a romance. Both Dickens and Thackeray left unfinished novels, — one *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*,

the other *Denis Duval*. Colonel Newcome and Cervante's *Don Quixote* are the finest gentlemen of fiction.

236. **George Eliot (Mrs. Cross, born Marian Evans) (1819–1880)** took the public by storm with *Adam Bede*. She had already written her charming *Scenes from Clerical Life* for *Blackwood's Magazine*. Doubt made a sad note in George Eliot's life and art. She was in early life an earnest Protestant; as she grew older she lost her belief in Protestantism and lapsed into the deepest kind of doubt.

The tone of her novels is pure; but her philosophy is that of one without hope. She is a realist, like Thackeray — not in the evil sense which means that realism must reflect only the vices in the world. Her masterpiece is *Middlemarch*, a splendid gallery of portraits from life. Some of her admirers put first her *The Mill on the Floss*, which is as great a novel as Blackmore's *Lorna Doone* or Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*. The pictures of child-life in *The Mill on the Floss* could only be the work of a genius. *Romola* is an historical novel; we may doubt with reason George Eliot's comprehension of the character of the great Dominican, Savonarola, but the historical environment is noble and fine, — the character of Tito is masterly. *Daniel Deronda* is good in parts. When George Eliot becomes philosophical she falls below her genius. This is plain in the second part of *Daniel Deronda*.

237. **Charlotte Brontë (1816–1855)** the author of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, Mrs. Gaskell, whose *Cranford* is as much of a classic as Miss Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Charles Reade, Wilkie Collins, and Anthony Trollope were contemporaries. Wilkie Collins' *Woman in White* has the most carefully constructed plot in English fiction. Charles Reade's novels are strong, but at times exaggerated and unnatural. His *Peg Woffington* is bright and clever. *The Cloister and the Hearth*, an historical romance, is inaccurate and its thesis is founded on ignorance of the truth. It, like *Hypatia* by Kingsley, should be carefully annotated, if admitted to libraries at all. *Put Yourself in His Place* and *Never too Late to Mend* are almost great.

Anthony Trollope was the most business-like of novelists. He wrote so much "copy" every day, — so many sheets of "copy" every hour of his working time. He left us one of the best autobiographies in our language. *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers* are admirable, and Mrs. Proudie, one of his characters, will live as long as Becky Sharp or Colonel Newcome.

William Black, author of *A Princess of Thule* and *McLeod of Dare*, W. D. Blackmore, author of *Lorna Doone*; Mrs. Oliphant, author of the *Chronicles of Carlingford*; James Payn, author of *Lost Sir Masingberd*; Sir Walter Besant, author of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, — were authors of great talent,

and their works are pure in tone and high in purpose. J. M. Barrie's *A Window in Thrums*, *Sentimental Tommy*, and *Tommy and Grizel* are bright lights in literature; — but there is no sign of a Thackeray or a George Eliot. Robert Louis Stevenson, (now dead) author of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The New Arabian Nights*, *Kidnapped*, *St. Ives*, etc., stands in the first rank at present, a little ahead of everybody else. Of religious novels, Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke* and *Yeast*, — idyls of a cult called Muscular Christianity, — are almost forgotten. Kingsley's *Hypatia*, which is a tissue of historical misrepresentations, has fortunately few readers. Newman's *Callista*, Wiseman's *Fabiola*, and Keon's *Dion and the Sibyls* hold their own among the judicious, though apparently "caviare to the general." It is a pity that Miss Yonge's earlier historical books are anti-Catholic. Her other novels are safe, and the *Armourers' Apprentices* may be read with interest and profit. Her reputation was made by her *Heir of Redclyffe*. The author of *The New Antigone*, Dr. Barry, has written three successful novels, *The Two Standards*, *Arden Massiter*, and *The Wizard's Knot*. Rider Haggard, author of *She* and *Montezuma's Daughter*, has a touch of sensuality, which, too, spoils W. H. Mallock's novel, *A Romance of the Nineteenth Century*. George Meredith, whose most important novel is *Richard Feverel* is held by many critics to rank first, with Thomas Hardy second. These two

novelists, who are fine artists, have become expositors of modern Paganism, in *Lord Ormont* and *Tess*.

Father Sheehan's *My New Curate* is a charming story, which made a new departure in English literature. It is a novel of Catholic clerical life.

The romantic school of fiction has strong disciples in Anthony Hope, Stanley Weyman, and Dr. A. Conan Doyle, author of *The Refugees*. Rudyard Kipling, whose short stories and poems, are much the fashion, did not succeed in a novel, — *The Light That Failed*; *Kim* has been better received. He writes forcibly. He seems to be a Pagan with genius. Time cannot stale *Tom Brown's Schooldays* or Canon Farrar's *Eric*. Mr. Rider Haggard's *Montezuma's Daughter* has an incident of the burying alive of a nun in Mexico. This has been effectually shown to have no more foundation in fact than a somewhat similar incident in Sir Walter Scott's poem, *Marmion*. Mr. A. Conan Doyle, in *The Refugees* has assumed that the priests in France were exceedingly intolerant. Dr. Reuben Parsons, author of *Some Lies and Errors of History*, has carefully contradicted Mr. Doyle's mis-statements. John Oliver Hobbes' (Mrs. Craigie) *School for Saints* has added much to its author's reputation; it has a sound religious tone. She and Mrs. Humphry Ward, whose books are unsympathetic, for good reasons, to Catholics, are the two foremost living English women novelists.

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