

17. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* holds the first place among English personal biographies.

18. *Bird's-eye view of the chief British writers and works of the eighteenth century*:

## POETS:

Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*.  
Robert Burns, *Songs*.  
William Cowper, *Poems*.

## PROSE-WRITERS:

Joseph Addison, *Essays in The Spectator*.  
John Arbuthnot, M.D., *The History of John Bull*.  
Daniel De Foe, *Robinson Crusoe*.  
Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*.  
Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*.  
Tobias Smollett, M.D., *Humphrey Clinker*.  
Alban Butler, *Lives of the Saints*.  
Richard Challoner, D.D., *Memoirs of Missionary Priests*.  
David Hume, *History of England*.  
William Robertson, D.D., *History of America*.  
Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.  
Samuel Johnson, LL.D., *Dictionary of the English Language*.

19. For the other British writers of the eighteenth century most worthy of mention—namely, *Matthew Prior, John Gay, Ambrose Philips, Thomas Gray, James Thomson, William Collins, Mark Akenside, M.D., Allan Ramsay, Edward Young, James Beattie, Sir Isaac Newton, Joseph Butler, D.D., Lady Montagu, Charles Dodd, James Boswell, James Macpherson, Hannah More, William Paley, D.D., Adam Smith, and Sir William Blackstone*—see **SHORT DICTIONARY** at the close of the volume.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE BRITISH LITERATURE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

A.D. 1800 to 1880.

THE AGE OF SCOTT, NEWMAN, AND TENNYSON.

## HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

1. GREAT BRITAIN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.—The nineteenth century is our own age, and is, perhaps, too near to write its history. But we may glance at some of the most important events that influenced British literature. Since the year 1800, four rulers have occupied the English throne—*George III., George IV., William IV., and Queen Victoria*. Towards the close of the last century the *French Revolution* led to a dreadful social, irreligious, and political upheaval. It rocked France like an earthquake. The shock was felt in England and throughout Europe. It involved France in war with the other great powers, and raised up the most brilliant military genius of modern times. For years the gentle voice of peace was drowned by the tramp of armies and the thunder of artillery. Again and again England and her allies grappled with *Napoleon*,\* and

\* Born 1769, died 1821.

were made to bite the dust. Britannia, indeed, "ruled the wave"; but on the land France was supreme. In 1810 George III. lost the little reason he ever had, and his son, the Prince of Wales,\* was appointed Regent. The extraordinary career of Napoleon was also drawing to a close. Flushed with triumph, this soldier of fortune grew dizzy in his elevation, and forgot to be just and religious. His treatment of the Vicar of Christ was shameful. The bubble of success burst. Disaster frowned on his arms, and, in 1815, his last hopes were buried on the blood-stained field of Waterloo. England and her allies rejoiced in the hard-won victory.

The insane George III. died in 1820, and was succeeded by his son George IV., who for ten years had acted as Regent. His short reign was full of political excitement. Its most glorious event, however, was the emancipation of the much-oppressed Catholics in 1829,† which was brought about chiefly by the manly, persevering exertions of *Daniel O'Connell*, the fearless and eloquent champion of civil and religious liberty. George IV. was called "the first gentleman in Europe," but he dabbled in scandal, quarrelled with his wife, swore like a jockey, and made anything but a clean reputation. He was a worn-out voluptuary. He had some ability but no virtue.

George IV. died in 1830, and his brother William IV. came to the throne. His reign of seven years would be a complete blank except for the passage of

\* Afterwards George IV.

† Many years before this, William Pitt had given the Catholics a pledge that he would relieve them from their disabilities. But old George III.—fanatic that he was—was hopelessly obstinate in his anti-Catholic feeling. He even intimated that he should regard every man as his personal enemy who would urge the claims of the Catholics to emancipation.

the *Reform Bill*.\* William had little brains, and was rough and boorish in behavior. He had been an unmanageable naval officer before being clothed with regal power; but, certainly, he was better fitted by nature to walk a quarter-deck than to guide the destinies of a great kingdom.

The crown passed to the youthful Victoria, daughter of the Duke of Kent,† in 1837, and her already long reign has been marked by many historic events. In 1840 she was married to her German cousin, *Prince Albert*. About this time an extraordinary movement began in the *Anglican Church*—the Protestant Church of England as by law established—which has gone on increasing, and which must at no distant period lead to its destruction. The days of savage fanaticism were passing. A spirit of honest inquiry led some of the best and brightest minds of England to study Christian antiquity and the claims of the Catholic Church. A new world of truth was revealed. The scales of prejudice and ignorance fell from their eyes. Grace completed the work. Many of these noble and gifted men sacrificed every earthly consideration, and returned to that ancient faith from which their fathers had apostatized in the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth. The leader in this glorious movement was the learned *John Henry New-*

\* The Reform Act (passed in 1832) bestowed the privilege of the franchise in towns upon occupants who paid a rental of ten pounds; in counties upon those who paid a rental of forty pounds. It gave the people some influence over a corrupt representative government. At the beginning of the present century, fully two thirds of the members of the House of Commons were appointed by peers or other influential persons. Seats in the House were openly sold, and amongst the buyers and bribers of members was the king himself, George III.

† The Duke of Kent was the fourth son of George III. Queen Victoria was born in 1819.



man\* of Oxford University. He became a Catholic in 1845. "I am this night," he wrote to some friends on October 8th, "expecting Father Dominic, the Passionist. . . . He is a simple, holy man; and withal gifted with remarkable powers. He does not know of my intention; but I mean to ask of him admission into the One Fold of Christ."† *Faber, Manning, Digby, Ward, Allies, Marshall, Dalgairns, the Marquis of Bute*, and other eminent men followed his example; and during the last thirty-five years over 2000 of the master-intellects and the highest nobility of England have sought peace and truth in the One Fold so happily reached by Newman.

The gaunt figure of famine visited Ireland in 1846, and in a few years over two millions of that faithful and sorely tried people took their way to the silent tomb, or were scattered over the wide world. The great O'Connell died in 1847. Three years later Pope Pius IX. re-established the Catholic hierarchy in England, with *Cardinal Wiseman* at its head. "Catholic England," wrote the new Archbishop, "has been restored to its orbit in the ecclesiastical firmament from which its light had long vanished, and begins anew its course of regularly adjusted action round the centre of unity, the source of jurisdiction, of light, and of vigor." Protestant bigotry shouted itself hoarse; and the boundless fanaticism and big lungs of the Briton became the laughing-stock of the world. Parliament, in a fit of insanity, passed an act forbidding Catholic bishops to take titles from their sees, but it was never put in force. Nobody troubled about it, and many years after (1871) it was quietly re-

\* Now Cardinal Newman.

† *Apologia.*

pealed. The attack on Russia, known as the *Crimean War*, lasted nearly two years (1854-1856), and England retired from the contest with little glory and less reward. The manner in which disaffected portions of the British Empire are "governed" even in this age was well represented in 1857, in the treatment of the rebellious Sepoys of India, who, when captured, were hung in groups upon any convenient tree, or were fastened to the muzzles of cannon whose discharge shattered their bodies into fragments. The Anglican Church in Ireland was disestablished in 1869; and ten years later Leo XIII. re-established the Catholic hierarchy in Scotland. Thus the great English apostasy of the sixteenth century has proved in our own day that it is a mere thing of time—the work of man, and like him subject to change, decay, and dissolution.

2. THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AS AN "AGE OF PROGRESS" IN GREAT BRITAIN.—The nineteenth century has really been an "age of progress" in Great Britain. In the early part of the century the social, religious, and political condition of the people was lamentable. They were crushed by taxation. Bread was taxed. The light of heaven was taxed. Windows were taxed, and rather than pay it people shut out the sunlight to the great injury of health and comfort. Newspapers were taxed about seven cents a copy, in order, it seems, to render such reading too costly a luxury for the workingman. The high price of soap from taxation made filth inevitable. Even salt was taxed to the extent of forty times its cost, and it was with much difficulty the toiling millions could obtain it. At the beginning of the century, it was estimated that a poor mechanic paid nearly half

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his scanty income to the government in direct and indirect taxation. One by one, however, those crying abuses were swept away by a progressive legislation.

The British criminal laws were savage, and were administered with brutal ferocity. Eighty years ago the law recognized *two hundred and twenty-three capital crimes*.\* Every rogue, great or small, was put to death. If a man thoughtlessly shot a rabbit, or cut down young trees, he was hanged: his punishment was the same as that of the murderer or the highway robber. But these needless cruelties were gradually abolished. In 1837 the list of capital offences was reduced to *seven*.

A general coarseness of manners prevailed. Profane swearing was the constant practice of gentlemen. Even ladies swore orally and in their letters. The Protestant chaplain cursed the sailors, because it seemed to make them more attentive to his sermon. Lawyers swore at the bar. Judges swore on the bench. The king swore incessantly. Thus when the "head of the Anglican Church" and the "first gentleman in Europe" wished to express approval of the weather, of a handsome horse, or of a dinner which he had enjoyed, he supported his royal word by a profane oath. Among high and low, this coarseness was deplorable. Conversation was stained with wickedness, and society clothed itself with cursing as with a garment. The ordinary manners at the courts of George IV. and William IV. were such in truth as could not be seen in a decent bar-room of the present day. The accession of Queen Victoria, however, brought about a much-needed change; and both manners and conversation have since greatly improved.

\* Among these was the "terrible crime" of being a Catholic.

England had fallen into an abyss of ignorance in spite of the boasted "Reformation." Education was as far advanced in the reign of Henry VIII. as in that of George III. At the beginning of the present century, England had only about 3300 public and private schools. Fifty years later they numbered 45,000; but it was only in 1870 that the work of public instruction began with real earnestness. In 1837 there were only 58 persons in every 100 who were able to sign their names to the marriage-register; in 1876 the number had risen to 81 in every 100, and is steadily growing.

It was only in 1807 that gas was first used to light the streets of London. When the battle of Waterloo was fought it took the despatches three days to reach the English capital. But soon the *steamboat*,\* the *railway*,† and the *telegraph*‡ came, and the world moved as it never did before. At the beginning of the century the *printing-press* was still a rude machine able to throw off no more than 150 copies an hour.§ To-day a machine, driven by steam, is fed with huge rolls of paper, and gives out newspapers, cut and folded, at the rate of 25,000 copies an hour. The postage-stamp dates from 1840.

At the beginning of the century the human hand performed all the work that was done, and performed

\* First successfully used in 1807 by Robert Fulton on the Hudson River, and soon after introduced into Great Britain.

† A railway from Liverpool to Manchester was formally opened for traffic in 1825.

‡ Morse's telegraph came into practical use in 1844. The first successful submarine cable was laid between Dover and Calais in 1851. The first successful Atlantic cable, connecting the Old and New Worlds, was laid in 1858.

§ From the date of the invention of printing down to the close of 1814 there had been almost no improvement made on the printing-press.

it badly. Now machinery sews our clothing, reaps the fields, thrashes the grains, moves the steam-locomotive at a mile a minute, and drives the majestic steamer across the Atlantic in a week. *Chemistry, physiology, medicine*, and all the natural and physical sciences have made magnificent advances.

"One cannot but feel how fortunate," says Henry Reed, "how providential it was that the wonderful results of physical science which this century has witnessed were not accomplished in the last century, at a time when a low state of religious opinion was prevailing, when scepticism was dominant in literature; for at such a time the victories of science over the powers of the material universe, instead of raising our sense of the Creator's power, and inspiring that humility which true science ever cherishes, the more deeply at every advance it makes—instead of this, an age of unbelief, whose literature had divorced itself from revelation, would have been ready to use the results of science to decoy men into that insidious atheism which substitutes Nature for God, and would have entangled our spiritual nature in the meshes of materialism.

"The truest cultivation of science and the truest cultivation of literature in our day have shown this harmony, that alike for the scientific and the literary study of man and nature—for the naturalist, for instance, and the poet—there is needed the same humble, willing, dutiful inquiry, a power of reciprocity as well as of search. The man of science, and the poet, equally, will miss the truth, if either the one or the other grows to deal boldly with nature, instead of reverently following her guidance; if he seals his heart against her secret influences; if he has a theory

to maintain, a solution which shall not be disturbed; and once possessed of this false cipher, he reads amiss all the golden letters around him."\*

3. THE ENGLISH LITERATURE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, AND SOME OF THE AGENTS THAT INFLUENCED IT.—The nineteenth century has greatly enriched English literature. It has been a period of noted intellectual activity and bold, original investigation in Great Britain. Its history, of course, throws much light on its literature. In its early years we trace the dark, stormy influence of the French Revolution and the conquering career of Napoleon—events that stirred the mind of Europe and left their impression on English letters. The poetry of *Byron*—the "Napoleon of the realms of rhyme"—is a true reflection of that wild and warlike period. Much that was then written is unhappily tinged by the prevailing coarseness, skepticism, and indelicacy of the times. The efforts that finally produced Catholic emancipation gave birth to the fiery, splendid, and powerful eloquence of *Grattan, Shiel, O'Connell*,† and others, and aroused the strong genius of *Bishop Doyle*, and the keen, witty mind of *Sydney Smith*. For better or worse, German literature, more than that of any other nation, has greatly influenced the British intellect of the present century. This influence is most distinctly traceable in the writings of *Coleridge*, and especially those of *Thomas Carlyle*. The religious movement which gave *Newman, Faber, Manning*, and so many bright, noble spirits to the Catholic Church has a rich literature of its own.

\* *Lectures on English Literature.*

† The productions of those Irish writers are noticed in Book III.

But infidelity and materialism have profanely invaded the domain of both science and literature. The ant, snail, frog, and ape are as eagerly studied and misread as if each had a boon or a revelation to confer upon the whole human race. The soul of man is neglected, but his body is honored with patient and minute investigation. God is ignored. The earth is asked to bear false witness against its Almighty Creator. We have such an abundance of profound babble, "scientific" lies, and blasphemous nonsense, that it has grown unfashionable to "read sermons in stones," or express a belief in everlasting punishment. Such gifted men as *Darwin*, *Huxley*, *Tyndall*, and *Spencer* have set themselves to the work of teaching a false philosophy, degrading to man and hostile to God and the Christian religion. The same false and pernicious principles have been carried into general literature by such able writers as *Mill*, *Buckle*, *Lecky*, and "*George Eliot*." English literature is cursed with a growing pagan element. This is an age of intellectual pride, but the repulsive pride which attacks truth inspires no kind feeling. It is the spirit of Lucifer. It deserves nothing but scorn and punishment. "I believe," says Ruskin, "the first test of a truly great man is humility." But humility is a virtue almost unknown in English letters, which for over three centuries have been pride-stricken, filled with falsehood, and in a state of revolt against the truth.

Another feature is quite noteworthy. British bigotry and anti-Catholic fanaticism, it need hardly be said, have largely found expression in print. Nor is the present century an exception. During its early portion England was overflowing with intolerance,

and every branch of literature was pervaded by an ignorant and malignant spirit of hatred towards the Catholic Religion. Even the school-books on grammar, history, geography, logic, and rhetoric were pressed into the service of falsehood and fanaticism. Picking up a school-dictionary, issued about sixty years ago, we turn over a few leaves and read: "*Anti-Christ*, one who opposes Christ—the *Pope*." Nor was this miserable teaching without its fruits. "When I was young," says Cardinal Newman, "and after I was grown up, I thought the Pope to be anti-christ. At Christmas, 1824-5, I preached a sermon to that effect."\* Pulpits rang with abuse of the Pope from one end of the year to the other. The blind led the blind, and England was full of brutal, blinding bigotry. Even such men as Sir Walter Scott in his *Waverley Novels*, Macaulay and Hallam in their *Histories*† and other works, and Archbishop Whately in his *Elements of Logic* could not rise above the narrow spirit of anti-Catholic intolerance. Happily, there is now less to complain of. The doors of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge were opened to Catholics in 1871; and, on the whole, English letters are marked by a more just and generous spirit towards the ancient faith.

The first thirty or forty years of the present century constitute one of the great creative periods in

\* *Apologia*.

† It may be stated, once for all, that there is not a single British Protestant historian who does not in some way bear false witness against Catholics and the Catholic Church; but whether this systematic injustice is to be attributed to invincible ignorance or invincible intolerance in the writers it would indeed be hard to conjecture. English history is crammed with falsehood, and Cobbett has bluntly said that it contains more lies than that of all the other books in the world.

English literature; and, as is usual during such periods, poetry rose in popularity, and held the supremacy. It was a time of transition from the cold, artificial formalism of the eighteenth century to something more warm, hearty, and natural. The names of *Scott*, *Byron*, *Moore*, *Coleridge*, *Campbell*, and *Wordsworth* belong to this period. Later years can claim no such array of poetic genius. Our own day may be represented by *Mrs. Browning*, *Miss Procter*, *Robert Browning*, and *Alfred Tennyson*.

The present century has witnessed the decline of the British drama even below the point at which it stood one hundred years ago. Why this is so it would not be easy to explain; but there is no doubt as to the fact that the plays written by men of genius within the last sixty or seventy years have generally proved ill adapted for the stage, while the authors of the successful plays have not been men of genius.\*

Prose has had a growth that is truly marvellous. It covers immense fields in fiction and periodical literature, not to mention other departments of letters. *Scott's Waverley Novels* and the works of *Dickens*, *Thackeray*, and other writers of fiction would, in themselves, make a large library.

As to British periodical literature, it may be said that its size and variety baffle description. At its two extremes stand the *quarterly* and the *daily*. *The Edinburgh Review*, the oldest of the quarterlies, was started in 1802 by *Sydney Smith*, *Francis Jeffrey*, and a few able young men. It was followed by *The Quarterly Review* (1809), *The Westminster Review* (1824), *The Dublin Review* † (1836), and some others.

\* Thomas Arnold.

† The chief organ of the Catholics of Great Britain.

Among the chief monthlies are the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1731), the oldest of its class; *Blackwood's Magazine* (1817), *Frazer's Magazine* (1830); and of later growth are *The Cornhill*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, *The Month*,\* *The Fortnightly Review*, *The Contemporary Review*, and *The Nineteenth Century*. Among the most prominent of the British weeklies are *The Saturday Review*, *The Athenæum*, *The Spectator*, and *The Tablet*;\* while among the principal dailies we may note *The Times*, *The Daily News*, and *The Daily Telegraph*—all published in London and having a large circulation.†

The present age has produced the greatest historians in English literature. No other century can point to such men as *Lingard*, *Hallam*, *Macaulay*, *Alison*, *Grote*, *Carlyle*, *Stubbs*, *Green*, and *Freeman*. The fields of art, science, criticism, politics, philosophy, biography, and theology have all been ably and ardently cultivated. The chief names in this connection are *Ruskin*, *Brewster*, *Hamilton*, *Faraday*, *Whe-well*, *Darwin*, *Huxley*, *Tyndall*, *Spencer*, *Mivart*, *Jeffrey*, *Sydney Smith*, *Cobbett*, *Lockhart*, *Wiseman*, *Faber*, *Newman*, *Manning*, *Marshall*, *Dalgairns*, *Ward*, and *Harper*.

English letters, in Great Britain, seem to be drifting into a period of decline. The old masters are rapidly passing away, and their places remain unfilled. Nor can much hope be gathered from the intellectual condition of the nation at large. While a taste for reading of some sort is daily increasing, the taste for serious study of any kind is diminishing among the

\* Catholic.

† The *Times* has a reputed circulation of 100,000 copies a day; the *Daily News*, 160,000 copies; and the *Daily Telegraph*, 220,000 copies.

great mass of the English people. It is the age of rapid living and rapid reading. Books are devoured, but few study.\* "A true student," says a recent English writer, "will soon be as rare as the dodo, and a true *littérateur* be as old-fashioned a spectacle as a true scholar is to-day."

## LESSON I.

LORD BYRON. DIED 1824.

- (1) *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.* (2) *The Prisoner of Chillon.*  
(3) *Don Juan.* (4) *Dramas.*

SAMUEL T. COLERIDGE. DIED 1834.

- (1) *Rime of the Ancient Mariner.* (2) *Christabel.*  
(3) *Lectures on Shakspeare.* (4) *Biographia Literaria.*

## 1. Who was Lord Byron?

Lord Byron, † the first English poet of his day, was an erratic genius of great energy, originality, and depth of feeling.

## 2. Tell us something of his career.

Byron was born at London, and had the misfortune of belonging to a bad family. ‡ He derived little benefit from his stay at Cambridge, for he was a careless, headstrong student. After being a member of

\* During the year 1880 there were published in England 5708 new books and new editions. There is really a superabundance of cheap manuals, boiled-down biography, trashy fiction, poor poetry, and ready-made criticism on the most abstruse subjects.

† His full name was *George Gordon Byron*.

‡ His father was a villain; his grand-uncle a murderer; his mother a woman of violent temper; and himself, with all this legacy, a man of powerful passions. If evil is in any degree to be palliated because it is hereditary, those who most condemn it in the abstract, may still look with compassionate leniency upon the career of Lord Byron.—*Coppée*.

the House of Lords for some years, he left England in 1816—never to see it again. The close of his wild, unhappy life, however, is gilded by a ray of sunset glory. He went to aid the struggling Greeks, and died in the land of Homer and Demosthenes.

## 3. Which is his chief poem?

*Childe\* Harold's Pilgrimage.*

## 4. In what does this work abound?

It abounds in exquisite photographs of man, art, nature, and society. † It was inspired by the poet's travels.

## 5. Mention one of the best of his many short poems?

*The Prisoner of Chillon*, a painful story of touching tenderness.

## 6. Did not Byron try his hand at dramatic writing?

He did, but without much success. Byron had not the power of *going out of himself*, and his dramas are only dramas *in form*. ‡

## 7. What was the last famous work that came from his pen, and how must it be judged?

The poem of *Don Juan*. It exhibits fine descrip-

\* *Childe* is an old English word signifying a knight.

† *Childe Harold* contains the fine pen-picture known as the address to the ocean. We give the opening stanza:

"Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!  
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;  
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control  
Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain  
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain  
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,  
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,  
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan—  
Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown."

It is worthy of remark that *Childe Harold* begins and ends with the ocean. It is written in the Spenserian stanza, and, in form at least, resembles the *Fairy Queen*.

‡ His play of *Sardanapalus*, however, on account of its scenic effects, still keeps the stage.



tive power and a wonderful mastery over language; but, in spite of all its beauties, it is grossly immoral, and the most dangerous of Byron's productions.

8. What may be said of Byron as a teacher?

He was, unhappily, a bad teacher, who wrote some of the worst lessons contained in poetry. So long as truth is beautiful and virtue precious, so long must the warning finger of condemnation be raised against the writings of Lord Byron. Danger lurks under the leaves of his works.\*

9. What has been observed of his style and merits as a literary artist?

He possesses a style of remarkable vigor and great felicity of expression; but the beauty and sublimity of his poems are confined to passages. Judged as a whole, none of them can be called a finished work of art.

10. What other most remarkable personage figured in the literary world during the time of Lord Byron?

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a native of England, and an eccentric genius of rare powers but no industry.

\* He could not even pen an epitaph on his dog without giving vent to his black hatred of mankind. When his large Newfoundland died, he raised a monument, and wrote an inscription which ends thus:

"To mark a friend's remains these stones arise;  
I never knew but one—and here he lies!"

"It was the frequent boast of this poet," writes Hall, "that he scorned and hated humankind; and out of this feeling, or this pretension, grew his labors to corrupt it. It was not alone against things held sacred by society that his spleen and venom were directed. He strove to render odious some of the best and purest men that ever lived; and his attacks were not the momentary ebullitions of dislike, but the produce of deep and settled hatred—the more bitter in proportion as the cause was small."

"His complete works," says an American writer, "ought never to be purchased; and we may feel proud not to be acquainted with them, except by extracts and beauties."

11. Which is Coleridge's chief and best known poem?

*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, a weird sea-tale told in the simple style of the old ballad.\*

12. What is *Christabel*?

It is a noble fragment of a poem, wild and mystic in character. Its diction is delightful, and it glitters with exquisite imagery.

13. What merit belongs to Coleridge's *Lectures on Shakspeare*?

They were the first masterly criticism, in English, on the genius of Shakspeare.

14. What is the *Biographia Literaria*?

It is a collection of valuable sketches of men of letters, and is written with rare critical power.

15. What has been remarked of Coleridge's mastery over language?

He was a consummate master of prose and verse. His verse, especially, breathes all sounds and melodies:

"For now 'tis like all instruments,  
Now like a lovely flute;  
And now it is an angel's song,  
That makes the heavens be mute."

16. What radical defect marred the character and dwarfed the achievements of this gifted man?

He lacked *steadiness of purpose* and *manly industry*, without which nothing really great can be achieved.† Coleridge was a magnificent dreamer.

\* "The *Ancient Mariner*," writes Dice, "was founded on a strange dream which a friend of Coleridge had, who fancied that he saw a skeleton ship, with figures in it."

"The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,  
The furrow followed free;  
We were the first that ever burst  
Into that silent sea."

† "No amount of genius," says Lacordaire, "will go far unbacked by work. Work is the key to eloquence and knowledge, as well as to virtue."—*Letters to Young Men*.

He scarcely finished anything but his sentences. We know him only by fragments. He was a giant in conception, but a dwarf in execution.

## LESSON II.

✓ THOMAS CAMPBELL. DIED 1844.

- (1) *The Pleasures of Hope.* (2) *Gertrude of Wyoming.*  
(3) *Songs.*

✗ WILLIAM WORDSWORTH. DIED 1850.

- (1) *The Excursion.* (2) *The Prelude.*  
(3) *Sonnets and Short Poems.*

17. Who may be considered the greatest British lyric poet of this century?

Thomas Campbell.

18. Give a brief outline of his career.

Campbell was born at Glasgow, Scotland, and educated in the university of that city.\* His first poem made him famous. He travelled for a time, but his life was otherwise quiet and uneventful. He was one of the founders of the London University.

19. What was his first poem?

*The Pleasures of Hope*, which was given to the world before Campbell was twenty-two years of age. It is a brilliant production, exquisite in language, and lovely and sublime in the subjects selected. †

\* Campbell, though born in Glasgow, was a Highlander both in blood and nature; and his genius is most attractive in those poems in which his loving Celtic nature has free play.—*Arnold.*

† Among others it contains the often-quoted lines,

“ Like angel-visits, few and far between,”

and

“ ’Tis distance lends enchantment to the view.”

20. What is *Gertrude of Wyoming*?

It is a beautiful poem, written in the Spenserian stanza, and embodying a sad, touching tale; but it is neither true to the nature of the country nor the Indian character.\*

21. In what branch of poetry has Campbell attained the highest excellence?

As a lyric poet.

22. Name some of his most noted lyrics and short poems.

*The Exile of Erin* †, *Ye Mariners of England*, ‡

\* The scenes, characters, and incidents of this poem, as is well known, are laid in the ill-fated Valley of Wyoming, on the Susquehanna, opposite the present town of Wilkesbarre, in Pennsylvania. The savage massacre that suggested it took place during the American Revolution in the summer of 1778, and was the work of Tories and Indians, commanded by Colonel Butler and the Indian chief Brant. “Colonel Butler,” writes Hassard, “defeated the small body of soldiers which attempted to oppose him (July 3), and compelled the rest of the people who had taken refuge in Fort Wyoming to surrender, on promise of security to life and property. Butler, however, was unable to control his savage allies. They massacred about 400 prisoners and civilians, burned the houses, and destroyed the crops; and the survivors, mostly women and children, fled to the mountains, where many of them perished.”—*History of the United States.*

† It is said that he wrote this touching poem at Hamburg, after meeting a number of brave Irish exiles, who had fled from the hapless rebellion of 1798. *The Exile of Erin* consists of five stanzas, of which the following is the first:

“ There came to the beach a poor exile of Erin,  
The dew on his thin robe was heavy and chill;  
For his country he sighed, when at twilight repairing  
To wander alone by the wind-beaten hill.  
But the day-star attracted his eye’s sad devotion,  
For it rose o’er his own native isle of the ocean,  
Where once, in the fire of his youthful emotion,  
He sang the bold anthem of *Erin go bragh!*”

‡ *Ye Mariners of England* is in four stanzas. We give the first:

“ Ye mariners of England!  
That guard our native seas;  
Whose flag has braved, a thousand years,  
The battle and the breeze!  
Your glorious standard launch again,  
To match another foe!  
And sweep through the deep,  
While the stormy tempests blow;  
While the battle rages loud and long,  
And the stormy tempests blow.”

*The Battle of the Baltic, Hohenlinden,\* O'Connor's Child, and Lord Ullin's Daughter.*

23. Sum up Campbell's good qualities as a poet.

Campbell had the true poetic fire. He possessed, in the highest degree, what we call beauty of style.† He did not write much, but the exquisite finish of his poems is admirable, and some of his lyrics seem to be absolutely perfect.

24. Who was acknowledged to be one of the great chiefs of English letters about the middle of the present century?

William Wordsworth. From 1840 to 1850 he was considered the greatest living poet in England.

25. Is there anything remarkable about his life?

No; he was born in the extreme northwest of England, and took his degree at Cambridge. Some

\* While travelling in Europe in 1800, Campbell witnessed the battle of Hohenlinden from the tower of a Bavarian monastery. His lines on the event form a ringing battle-song.

"By torch and trumpet fast arrayed,  
Each horseman drew his battle-blade,  
And furious every charger neighed  
To join the dreadful revelry.

"Then shook the hills with thunder riven,  
Then rushed the steed to battle driven,  
And, louder than the bolts of heaven,  
Far flashed the red artillery.

"Few, few shall part where many meet!  
The snow shall be their winding-sheet,  
And every turf beneath their feet  
Shall be a soldier's sepulchre."

† As an instance take his first two stanzas "To the Rainbow":

"Triumphal arch, that fill'st the sky  
When storms prepare to part,  
I ask not proud Philosophy  
To teach me what thou art.

"Still seem, as to my childhood's sight,  
A midway station given  
For happy spirits to alight  
Betwixt the earth and heaven."

travelling and the labors of a studious and literary career filled up the remainder of his long life. He became poet-laureate in 1843.

26. Which is Wordsworth's chief poem?

*The Excursion*, a long unfinished poem—the fragment of a great moral epic. It is written in blank-verse, and in its present form consists of nine books.

27. Of what topics does *The Excursion* treat, and what are its merits and defects?

It discusses the deepest questions concerning *God, man, nature, and society*. The poem contains many sublime passages, but it has too much flat, wearisome reflection and philosophy to be all poetry. Few ever read it through, and it is only the *thinking few* who can appreciate it. But, in spite of its faults and dullness, it is a grand composition.

28. What is *The Prelude*?

It is a long autobiographical poem in fourteen books.\*

29. What praise has been given to Wordsworth's *Sonnets*?

The very highest; he has written some of the finest sonnets † in our language.

\* The full title is, *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind*. It was begun as a preparation for his other works

† The one entitled *Scorn not the Sonnet* is a happy and suggestive effort:

"Scorn not the Sonnet! Critic, you have frowned,  
Mindless of its just honors. With this key  
Shakspeare 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 Camoëns 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 fairy-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."

30. What verdict may be fairly passed on Wordsworth and his poems?

Wordsworth was a poet, deep, thoughtful, and religious; but he was wanting in the fire and force of high genius. He is true to nature. His style is simple and often vigorous. But notwithstanding many merits and beauties, his longer poems are nearly devoid of living interest and are frequently flat, lifeless, and commonplace.\* He will soon be read only in a volume of "beauties," containing one twentieth of his writings.

### LESSON III.

MRS. E. B. BROWNING. DIED 1861.

- (1) *Aurora Leigh*, and other Poems.
- (2) *Sonnets from the Portuguese*.

ADELAIDE A. PROCTER. DIED 1864.

*Poems and Lyrics.*

31. Who has been pronounced the greatest English poetess of the nineteenth century?

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who was born at London, and whose genius was aided by a very superior education. She was a thorough Latin and Greek scholar.

32. Which is her chief work?

*Aurora Leigh*, a long narrative poem in nine books. It recounts the life and thoughts of the poetess herself. It is "the autobiography of a heart and intellect."

\* "His longer poems," writes Lowell, "are Egyptian sand-wastes, with here and there an oasis of exquisite greenery, a grand image, sphynx-like, half buried in drifting commonplaces, or the solitary Pompey's Pillar of some towering thought."—*Among my Books.*

33. How does she rank as a writer of sonnets?

Her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* are among the very finest in the language.

34. What defects mar the writings of this gifted woman?

She is sometimes obscure in thought, and turgid and faulty in language; while, here and there, in her poems we catch the echoes of that false philosophy which is the curse of our age.

35. Who was Adelaide Anne Procter?

She was the accomplished daughter of the poet Procter,\* a native of London, and one of the best and sweetest singers of this age.

36. What are the chief characteristics of her poetry?

Simplicity, purity, Christian tenderness, and a faultless finish and felicity of expression.†

\* Bryan Waller Procter, better known as "Barry Cornwall," who died in 1868.

† Thirteen years before her happy death Miss Procter became a Catholic. The true faith—as it ever does—added new force and beauty to her genius. Her poetry had its roots in her own lovely character, at once so pure, cheerful, rounded, and full of charity. After a lingering illness, she died of consumption. "At midnight," writes Charles Dickens, "on the 2d of February, 1864, she turned down a leaf of a little book she was reading, and shut it up. And she quietly asked, as the clock was on the stroke of one, 'Do you think I am dying, mamma?'"

"I think you are very, very ill to-night, my dear."

"Send for my sister. My feet are so cold. Lift me up!"

"Her sister entering as they raised her, she said, 'It has come at last!' and, with a bright and happy smile, looked upward and departed."

The following is from her little poem called *Now*:

"Rise! for the day is passing,  
And you lie dreaming on;  
The others have buckled their armor,  
And forth to the fight are gone.  
A place in the ranks awaits you;  
Each man has some part to play:  
The Past and the Future are nothing  
In the face of the stern To-day."