LITERATURE PRIMERS

Edited by J. R. GREEN M.A.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Literature Primer.

Edited by JOHN RICHARD GREEN, M.A.

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BY THE

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1. **What Literature is.**—Before we can enter on the story of our English Literature we must try to understand what literature itself is. By literature we mean the written thoughts and feelings of intelligent men and women arranged in a way which will give pleasure to the reader. Literature has to do therefore, so far as its subject goes, with all the things about which we learn, and think, and feel. As to its form, it has two large divisions—one of which is called Prose Literature and the other Poetical Literature.

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1. **What Literature is.**—Before we can enter on the story of our English Literature we must try to understand what literature itself is. By literature we mean the written thoughts and feelings of intelligent men and women arranged in a way which will give pleasure to the reader. Literature has to do therefore, so far as its subject goes, with all the things about which we learn, and think, and feel. As to its form, it has two large divisions—one of which is called Prose Literature and the other Poetical Literature.

2. **Prose Literature.**—There are many kinds of prose literature. Men write in prose about philosophy, or history, or art, or religion, or science, or manners, or the lives of men. Prose literature then means the written thoughts, learning, and feelings of men on all these subjects. Everything in fact that is written of any kind, except poetry, may be called prose. But we must not think that everything that is called prose is literature. We cannot say, for instance, that a ship's log, or a catalogue, or the daily journal of a traveller, is to be called literature simply because it is written in prose. Writing is not literature unless it gives to the reader a pleasure which arises, not only from the things said, but from the way in which they are said, and that pleasure is only given when the words are carefully or curiously or beautifully put together into sentences. To do this in a special way is to have what we call style. As much art must be used in building sentences up out of words as in building houses, if we wish the prose we write to be worthy of the name of literature. And just as in looking at different kinds of houses, we say that one is built in a strong way, another in a simple way, another in an ornamental way, so we say in reading books written by different men that one is in a simple style, another in a grand, another in an eloquent style. Again, in looking at a large building, we see not only the way in which it is built, but also the character and the mind of the builder. So also in a prose book which is fit to belong to literature we ought to feel that there is a distinct mind and character who is speaking to us through the style, that is, through the way in which the words are put together. Prose then is not literature unless it have *style* and *character*, and be written with *curious care*.

3. **Of Poetical Literature** we may say the same thing. Poetry must be tried by rules more severe even than those by which we judge prose, and

unless it satisfies those rules it does not take rank as literature. There must be more care taken, more beauty, more musical movement in the arrangement of the words than in prose; and the way in which the thoughts and feelings of the poet are put together into words will always be, in true poetry, wholly different from the way in which they would be put together by a prose writer. Poetry speaks to us of all that belongs to Man, and of all that man feels or sees when he is delighted with the beauty or grandeur of the Natural World. These are its two chief subjects in literature; and it writes of them in different kinds of poetry, in all of which we English have done well. There is *epic* poetry, like Milton's great poem *Paradise Lost*, *dramatic* poetry, like Shakespeare's plays; *lyric* poetry, or short pieces on one subject, like the songs in his plays; *narrative* poetry, like Scott's *Lady of the Lake*; *descriptive* poetry, like Thomson's *Seasons*, which describes nature; and *allegorical* poetry, which tells a story with a hidden meaning in it. Of this last the best example is Spenser's *Faërie Queen*. These, then, are the two main divisions of literature.

4. **The History of English Literature,** then, is the story of what great English men and women thought and felt, and then wrote down in good prose or beautiful poetry in the English language. The story is a long one. It begins about the year 670, and it is still going on in the year 1875. Into this little book then is to be put the story of 1,200 years. No people that have ever been in the world can look back so far as we English can to the beginnings of our literature; no people can point to so long and splendid a train of poets and prose writers; no nation has on the whole written so much and so well. Every English man and woman has good reason to be proud of the work done by their forefathers in prose and poetry. Every one who can write a good book or a good song may say to himself, "I belong

to a great company, which has been teaching and delighting the world for more than 1,000 years." And that is a fact in which those who write and those who read ought to feel a noble pride.

5. **The English and the Welsh.**—This literature is written in English, the tongue of our fathers. They lived, while this island of ours was still called Britain, in Sleswick, Jutland and Holstein; but, either because they were pressed from the inland or for pure love of adventure, they took to the sea, and, landing at various parts of Britain at various times drove back, after 150 years of hard fighting, the Britons, whom they called Welsh, to the land now called Wales, and to Cornwall. It is well for those who study English literature to remember that in these two places the Britons remained as a distinct race with a distinct literature of their own, because the stories and the poetry of the Britons crept afterwards into English literature and had a great influence upon it. The whole tale of King Arthur, of which English poetry and even English prose is so full, was a British tale. Otherwise we English have nothing to do with the old dwellers in our country. We drove these Britons, as the Primer of English History will describe, utterly away.

6. **The First English Poetry.** — When we came to Britain we were great warriors and great sea pirates—"sea wolves" as a Roman poet calls us; and all our poetry down to the present day is full of war, and still more of the sea. No nation has ever written so much sea-poetry. It was in the blood of our fathers, who chanted their sea war-songs as they sailed. But we were more than mere warriors. We were a home-loving people when we got settled either in Sleswick or in England, and all our literature from the first writings to the last is full of domestic love, the dearness of home, and the ties of kinsfolk. We were a religious people, even as heathen, still more so when we became Christian; and our poetry is as much tinged with religion as with war. Whenever literature died down in England it rose again in poetry; and the first poetry at each recovery was religious, or linked to religion. We shall soon see that our first poems were of war and religion.

7. **The English Tongue.** — Of the language in which our literature is written we can say little here; it is fully discussed in the Primer of English Grammar. Of course it has changed its look very much since it began to be written. The earliest form of our English tongue is very different from modern English in form, pronunciation, and appearance, and one must learn it almost as if it were a foreign tongue; but still the language written in the year 700 is the same as that in which the prose of the Bible is written just as much as the tree planted a hundred years ago is the same tree to-day. It is this sameness of language, as well as the sameness of national spirit, which makes our literature one literature for 1200 years.

8. **Old English Poetry** was also different then from what it is now. It was not written in rime, nor were its syllables counted. The lines are short; the beat of the verse depends on the emphasis given by the use of the same letter, except in the case of vowels, at the beginning of words; and the emphasis of the words depends on the thought. The lines are written in pairs; and in the best work the two chief words in the first, and the one chief word in the second, usually begin with the same letter. Here is one example from a war-song:—

"*W*igu *w*intrum geong	"*W*arrior of *w*inters young
*W*ordum mælde."	With *w*ords spake."

After the Norman Conquest there gradually crept in a French system of rimes and of metres and accent which we find full-grown in Chaucer's works.

But unrimed and alliterative verse lasted in poetry to the reign of John, and alliteration was blended with rime up to the sixteenth century. The latest form of it occurs in Scotland.

9. **Our Greatest Early Poems** remaining are two—*Beowulf* and *Cædmon's Paraphrase of the Bible.* The first is on the whole a war story, the second is religious; and on these two subjects of war and religion English poetry for the most part speaks till the Conquest. BEOWULF was brought into our land from the Continent, and was rewritten in parts by a Christian Englishman of Northumbria. It is a story of the great deeds and death of a hero named Beowulf. Its social interest lies in what it tells us of the manners and customs of our forefathers before they came here; its poetical interest lies in its descriptions of wild nature, of the lives and feelings of the men of that time, and of the way in which the Nature-worship of our people made dreadful and savage places seem dwelt in—as if the places had a spirit—by monstrous beings. For it was thus that all that half-natural, half-spiritual world began in our poetry which, when men grew gentler and the country more cultivated, became so beautiful as faeryland. Here is the description of the dwelling-place of the Grendel, a man-fiend that devoured men, and whom Beowulf overcomes in battle :—

"A lonely land
Won they in; wolf-caverns,
Wind-traversed nesses,
Perilous fen-paths,
Where the mountain flood,
Under the mists of the ness,
Downwards is moved;
Flood under feld.
Not further from hence
Than a mile's space
Is the place of the mere;
Over which frown
And rustle the forests.
Fast-rooted the wood
The water that shadows;
There deadly the wonder
One may watch every night;
Fire in the flood."

The love of wild nature in our poetry, and the peopling of it with wild half-human things, begins in work like this. After the fight Beowulf returns to his own land, where he rules well for many years, till a Fire-drake, who guards a treasure, comes down to harry his people. The old king goes out then to fight his last fight, slays the dragon, but dies of its flaming breath, and his body is burned high up on a sea-washed ness or headland.

10. **Cædmon.**—The poem of Beowulf has the grave Teutonic power, but it is not native to our soil. It is not the first true English poem. That is the work of CÆDMON, and is also from Northumbria. The story of it, as told by Bæda, proves that the making of songs was common at the time. Cædmon was a servant to the monastery of Hild, an abbess of royal blood, at Whitby in Yorkshire. He was somewhat aged when the gift of song came to him, and he knew nothing of the art of verse, so that at the feasts when for the sake of mirth all sang in turn he left the table. One night, having done so and gone to the stables, for he had care of the cattle, he fell asleep, and One came to him in vision and said, "Cædmon, sing me some song." And he answered, "I cannot sing; for this cause I left the feast and came hither." Then said the other, "However, you shall sing." "What shall I sing?" he replied. "Sing the beginning of created things," answered the other. Whereupon he began to sing verses to the praise of God, and, awaking, remembered what he had sung and added more in verse worthy of God. In the morning he came to the steward, and told him of the gift he had received, and, being brought to Hild, was ordered to tell his dream before learned men, that they might give judgment whence his verses came. And when they had heard, they all said that heavenly grace had been conferred on him by our Lord.

11. **Cædmon's Poem,** written about 670, is for us the beginning of English poetry, and the story

of its origin ought to be loved by us. Nor should we fail to reverence the place where it began. Above the small and land-locked harbour of Whitby rises and juts out towards the sea the dark cliff where Hild's monastery stood, looking out over the German Ocean. It is a wild, wind-swept upland, and the sea beats furiously beneath, and standing there one feels that it is a fitting birthplace for the poetry of the sea-ruling nation. Nor is the verse of the first poet without the stormy note of the scenery among which it was written. In it also the old fierce war element is felt when Cædmon comes to sing the fight of the rebel angels with God and the overthrow of Pharaoh's host, and the lines, repeating, as was the old English way, the thought a second time, fall like stroke on stroke in battle. But the poem is religious throughout—Christianity speaks in it simply, sternly, with fire, and brings with it a new world of spiritual romance and feeling. The subjects of the poem were taken from the Bible, in fact Cædmon paraphrased the history of the Old and New Testament. He sang the creation of the world, the history of Israel, the book of Daniel, the whole story of the life of Christ, future judgment, purgatory, hell, and heaven. All who heard it thought it divinely given. "Others after him," says Bæda, "tried to make religious poems, but none could vie with him, for he did not learn the art of poetry from men, nor of men, but from God." It was thus that English song began in religion. The most famous passage of the poem not only illustrates the dark sadness, the fierce love of freedom, and the power of painting distinct characters which has always marked our poetry, but it is also famous for its likeness to a parallel passage in Milton. It is when Cædmon describes the proud and angry cry of Satan against God from his bed of chains in hell. The two great English poets may be brought together over a space of a thousand years in another

way, for both died in such peace that those who watched beside them knew not when they died.

12. **Lesser Old English Poems.**—Of the poetry that came after Cædmon we have few remains. But we have many things said which show us that his poem, like all great works, gave birth to a number of similar ones. The increase of monasteries where men of letters lived naturally made the written poetry religious. But an immense quantity of secular poetry was sung about the country. *Aldhelm*, a young man when Cædmon died, and afterwards Abbot of Malmesbury, united the song-maker to the religious poet. He was a skilled musician, and it is said that he had not his equal in the making or singing of English verse. His songs were popular in King Ælfred's time, and a pretty story tells, that when the traders came into the town on the Sunday, he, in the character of a gleeman, stood on the bridge and sang them songs, with which he mixed up Scripture texts and teaching. Of all this wide-spread poetry we have now only the few poems brought together in a book preserved at Exeter, in another found at Vercelli, and in a few leaflets of manuscripts. The poems in the *Vercelli book* are all religious: legends of saints and addresses to the soul; those in the *Exeter book* are hymns and sacred poems. The famous *Traveller's Song* and the *Lament of Deor* inserted in it, are of the older and pagan time. In both there are poems by CYNEWULF, whose name has come down to us. They are all Christian in tone. The few touches of love of nature in them dwell on gentle, not on savage scenery. They are sorrowful when they speak of the life of men, tender when they touch on the love of home, as tender as this little bit which still lives for us out of that old world: "Dear is the welcome guest to the Frisian wife when the vessel strands; his ship is come, and her husband to his house, her own provider. And she welcomes him in, washes his weedy garment, and clothes

him anew. It is pleasant on shore to him whom his love awaits." Of the scattered pieces the finest are two fragments, one long, on the story of *Judith*, and another short, in which Death speaks to Man, and describes "the low and hateful and doorless house," of which he keeps the key. But stern as the fragment is, with its English manner of looking dreadful things in the face, and with its English pathos, the religious poetry of our old fathers always went with faith beyond the grave. Thus we are told that King Eadgar, in the ode on his death in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, "chose for himself another light, beautiful and pleasant, and left this feeble life."

13. **The War Poetry of England** at this time was probably as plentiful as the religious. But it was not likely to be written down by the writers who lived in religious houses. It was sung from feast to feast and in the halls of kings, and it naturally decayed when the English were trodden down by the Normans. But we have two examples of what kind it was, and how fine it was, in the *Battle Song of Brunanburh*, 937, and in the *Song of the Fight at Maldon*, 991. A still earlier fragment exists in a short account of the *Battle of Finnesburg*, probably of the same time and belonging to as long a story as the story of Beowulf. Two short odes on the victories of King Eadmund, and on the coronation of King Eadgar, inserted in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, complete the list of war poems.

14. **The Songs of Brunanburh and Maldon** are fine war odes, the fitting sources, both in their short and rapid lines, and in their almost Homeric simplicity and force, of such war-songs as the "Battle of the Baltic" and the "Charge of the Light Brigade." The first describes the fight of King Æthelstan with Anlaf the Dane. From morn till night they fought till they were "weary of red battle" in the "hard hand play," till five young kings and seven earls of

Anlaf's host lay in that fighting place "quieted by swords," and the Northmen fled, and only "the screamers of war were left behind, the black raven and the eagle to feast on the white flesh, and the greedy battle-hawk, and the grey beast the wolf in the wood." The second is the story of the death of Brihtnoth, an ealdorman of Northumbria, in battle against the Danes. It contains 690 lines. In the speeches of heralds and warriors before the fight, in the speeches and single combats of the chiefs, in the loud laugh and mock which follow a good death-stroke, in the rapid rush of the verse when the battle is joined, the poem though broken, as Homer's verse is not, is Homeric. In the rude chivalry which disdains to take vantage ground of the Danes, in the way in which the friends and churls of Brihtnoth die one by one, avenging their lord, keeping faithful the tie of kinship and clanship, in the cry not to yield a foot's breadth of earth, in the loving sadness with which home is spoken of, the poem is English to the core. And in the midst of it all, like a song from another land, but a song heard often in English fights from then till now, is the last prayer of the great earl, when dying he commends his soul with thankfulness to God.

15. **Old English Prose.**—It is pleasant to think that I may not unfairly make English prose begin with BÆDA. He was born about A.D. 673, and was, like Cædmon, a Northumbrian. From 683 he spent his life at Jarrow, in the same monastery, he says, "and while attentive to the rule of mine order, and the service of the Church, my constant pleasure lay in learning, or teaching, or writing." He long enjoyed that pleasure, for his quiet life was long, and from boyhood till his very last hour his toil was unceasing. Forty-five works prove his industry, and their fame over the whole of learned Europe during his time proves their value. His learning was as various as

it was great. All that the world then knew of science, music, rhetoric, medicine, arithmetic, astronomy, and physics was brought together by him; and his life was as gentle and himself as loved as his work was great. His books were written in Latin, and with these we have nothing to do, but his was the first effort to make English prose a literary language, for his last work was a *Translation of the Gospel of St. John*, as almost his last words were in English verse. In the story of his death told by his disciple Cuthbert is the first record of English prose writing. When the last day came, the dying man called his scholars to him that he might dictate more of his translation. "There is still a chapter wanting," said the scribe, "and it is hard for thee to question thyself longer." "It is easily done," said Bæda, "take thy pen and write quickly." Through the day they wrote, and when evening fell, "There is yet one sentence unwritten, dear master," said the youth. "Write it quickly," said the master. "It is finished now." "Thou sayest truth," was the reply, "all is finished now." He sang the "Glory to God" and died. It is to that scene that English prose looks back as its sacred source, as it is in the greatness and variety of Bæda's Latin work that English literature strikes its key-note.

16. **Ælfred's Work.**—When Bæda died Northumbria was the home of English literature. Though as yet written mostly in Latin, it was a wide-spread literature. Wilfrid of York and Benedict Biscop had founded libraries and established monastic schools far and wide. Six hundred scholars gathered round Bæda ere he died. But towards the end of his life this northern literature began to decay, and after 866 it was, we may say, blotted out by the Danes. The long battle with these invaders was lost in Northumbria, but it was gained for a time by Ælfred the Great in Wessex; and with Ælfred's literary work learning changed its seat from the north

to the south. But he made it by his writings an English, not a Latin literature; and in his translations he, since Bæda's work is lost, is the true father of English prose. As Whitby is the cradle of English poetry, so is Winchester of English prose. At Winchester Ælfred took the English tongue and made it the tongue in which history, philosophy, law and religion spoke to the English people. No work was ever done more eagerly, or more practically. He brought scholars from different parts of the world. He set up schools in his monasteries "where every free-born youth, who has the means, shall attend to his book till he can read English writing perfectly." He presided over a school in his own court. He made himself a master of a literary English style, and he did this that he might teach his people. He translated the popular manuals of the time into English, but he edited them with large additions of his own, needful, as he thought, for English use. He gave his nation moral philosophy in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy;* a universal history, with geographical chapters of his own, in the *History of Orosius;* a history of England in *Bæda's History*, giving to some details a West Saxon form; and a religious handbook in the *Pastoral Rule* of Pope Gregory. We do not quite know whether he worked himself at the *English* or *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, but at least it was in his reign that it rose out of meagre lists into a full narrative of events. To him, then, we English look back as the father of English literature.

17. **The Later Old English Prose.**—The impulse he gave soon fell away, but it was revived under King Eadgar, when Æthelwald, Bishop of Winchester, made it his constant work to keep up English schools and to translate Latin works into English, and when Archbishop Dunstan took up the same pursuits with eagerness. Æthelwald's school sent out from it a scholar and abbot named Ælfric. He takes rank as

the first large translator of the Bible, turning into English the first seven books and part of Job. We owe to him a series of *Homilies*, and his *Colloquy*, afterwards edited by another Ælfric, may be called the first English-Latin dictionary. But this revival had no sooner begun to take root than the Northmen came again in force upon the land and conquered it. During the long interweaving of Danes and English together under Danish kings from 1013 to 1042, no English literature arose. It was not till the quiet reign of Edward the Confessor it again began to live. But no sooner was it born than the Norman invasion repressed, but did not quench its life.

18. **The English Chronicle.**—One great monument, however, of old English prose lasts beyond the Conquest. It is the English Chronicle, and in it our literature is continuous from Ælfred to Stephen. At first it was nothing but a record of the births and deaths of bishops and kings, and was probably a West Saxon Chronicle. Ælfred edited it from various sources, added largely to it from Bæda, and raised it to the dignity of a national history. After his reign, and that of his son Eadward, 901-925, it becomes scanty, but songs and odes are inserted in it. In the reign of Æthelred and during the Danish kings its fulness returns, and growing by additions from various quarters, it continues to be our great contemporary authority in English history till 1154, when it abruptly closes with the death of Stephen. "It is the first history of any Teutonic people in their own language; it is the earliest and the most venerable monument of English prose." In it old English poetry sang its last song, in its death old English prose dies. It is not till the reign of John that English poetry in any extended form appears again in the *Brut* of Layamon. It is not till the reign of Edward the Third that original English prose again begins.

CHAPTER II.

FROM THE CONQUEST TO CHAUCER, 1066—1400.

Layamon's *Brut*, 1205.—Ormin's *Ormulum*, 1215.—Sir John Mandeville's *Travels*, 1356.—William Langland's *Vision concerning Piers the Plowman*, 1362—1378.—John Wyclif's *Translation of the Bible*, 1380.—John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, 1393—4.

Geoffrey Chaucer, born 1340, died 1400.—*Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse*, 1369.—*Troylus and Creseide.*—*Parlament of Foules.*—*Compleynt of Mars.*—*Anelida and Arcite.*—*Hous of Fame.* 1374—1384.—*Legende of Good Women*, 1385.—*Prose Treatise on Astrolabe*, 1391.—*Canterbury Tales*, 1373 to 1400.

19. **General Outline.**—The invasion of Britain by the English made the island, its speech and its literature, English. The invasion of England by the Danes left our speech and literature still English. The Danes were of our stock and tongue, and we absorbed them. The invasion of England by the Normans seemed likely to crush the English people, to root out their literature, and even to threaten their speech. But that which happened to the Danes happened to the Normans also, and for the same reason. They were originally of like blood to the English, and of like speech; and though during their settlement in Normandy they had become French in manner and language, and their literature French, yet the old blood prevailed in the end. The Norman felt his kindred with the English tongue and spirit, became an Englishman, and left the French tongue to speak and write in English. We absorbed the Normans, and we took into our literature and speech some French elements they had brought with them. It was a process slower in literature than it

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Geoffrey Chaucer, born 1340, died 1400.—*Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse*, 1369.—*Troylus and Creseide.*—*Parlament of Foules.*—*Compleynt of Mars.*—*Anelida and Arcite.*—*Hous of Fame.* 1374—1384.—*Legende of Good Women*, 1385.—*Prose Treatise on Astrolabe*, 1391.—*Canterbury Tales*, 1373 to 1400.

19. **General Outline.**—The invasion of Britain by the English made the island, its speech and its literature, English. The invasion of England by the Danes left our speech and literature still English. The Danes were of our stock and tongue, and we absorbed them. The invasion of England by the Normans seemed likely to crush the English people, to root out their literature, and even to threaten their speech. But that which happened to the Danes happened to the Normans also, and for the same reason. They were originally of like blood to the English, and of like speech; and though during their settlement in Normandy they had become French in manner and language, and their literature French, yet the old blood prevailed in the end. The Norman felt his kindred with the English tongue and spirit, became an Englishman, and left the French tongue to speak and write in English. We absorbed the Normans, and we took into our literature and speech some French elements they had brought with them. It was a process slower in literature than it

was in the political history, but it began from the political struggle. Up to the time of Henry II. the Norman troubled himself but little about the English tongue. But when French foreigners came pouring into the land in the train of Henry and his sons, the Norman allied himself with the Englishman against these foreigners, and the English tongue began to rise into importance. Its literature grew slowly, but as quickly as most of the literatures of Europe, and it never ceased to grow. "The last memoranda of the Peterborough Chronicle are of year 1154. the last extant English Charter can scarcely be earlier than 1155." There are English sermons of the same century, and now, early in the next century, at the central time of this struggle, after the death of Richard the First, the *Brut* of Layamon and the *Ormulum* come forth within ten years of each other to prove the continuity, the survival, and the victory of the English tongue. When the patriotic struggle closed in the reign of Edward I., English literature had risen again through the song, the sermon, and the poem, into importance, and was written by a people made up of Norman and Englishman welded into one by the fight against the foreigner. But though the foreigner was driven out, his literature influenced and continued to influence, the new English poetry. The poetry, we say, for in this revival our literature was only poetical. All prose, with the exception of a few sermons and some religious works from the French, was written in Latin.

20. **Religious and Story-telling Poetry** are the two main streams into which this poetical literature divides itself. The religious poetry is entirely English in spirit and a poetry of the people, from the *Ormulum* of Ormin, 1215, to the *Vision of Piers the Plowman*, in which poem the distinctly English poetry reached its truest expression in 1362. The story-telling poetry is English at its beginning but becomes more and

more influenced by the romantic poetry of France, and in the end grows in Chaucer's hands into a poetry of the court and of high society, a literary in contrast with a popular poetry. But even in this the spirit of the poetry is English, though the manner is French. Chaucer becomes less French and even less Italian, till at last we find him entirely national in the *Canterbury Tales*, the best English example of story-telling we possess. The struggle then of England against the foreigner to become and remain England finds its parallel in the struggle of English poetry against the influence of foreign poetry to become and remain English. Both struggles were long and wearisome, but in both England was triumphant. She became a nation, and she won a national literature. It is the steps of this struggle we have now to trace along the two lines already laid down—the poetry of religion and the poetry of story-telling; but to do so we must begin in both instances with the Norman Conquest.

21. **The Religious Poetry.**— The religious revival of the 11th century was strongly felt in Normandy, and both the knights and Churchmen who came to England with William the Conqueror and during his son's reign were founders of abbeys whence the country was civilized. In Henry I.'s reign the religion of England was further quickened by missionary monks sent by Bernard of Clairvaux. London was stirred to rebuild St. Paul's, and abbeys rose in all the well-watered valleys of the North. The English citizens of London, and the English peasants in the country received a new religious life from the foreign noble and the foreign monk, and both were drawn together through a common worship. When this took place a desire arose for religious handbooks in the English tongue. Ormin's *Ormulum* is a type of these. We may date it, though not precisely, at 1215, the date of the Great Charter. It is entirely English, not five French words

are to be found in it. It is a metrical version of the service of each day with the addition of a sermon in verse. The book was called *Ormulum*, "for this that Orm it wrought," Orm being a contraction for Ormin. It marks the rise of English religious literature, and its religion is simple and rustic. Orm's ideal monk is to be "a very pure man, and altogether without property, except that he shall be found in simple meat and clothes." He will have "a hard and stiff and rough and heavy life to lead. All his heart and desire ought to be aye toward heaven, and his Master well to serve." This was English religion in the country at this date.

22. **Literature and the Friars.**—There was little religion in the towns, but this was soon changed. In 1221 the Mendicant Friars came to England, and they chose the towns for their work. Their influence was great, and they drew Norman and English more closely together on the ground of religion. The first Friars were foreigners, and they necessarily used many French words in their English teaching, and Normans as well as English now began to write religious works in English. In 1303 Robert of Brunne translated a French poem, the Manual of Sins (written thirty years earlier by William of Waddington), under the title of *Handlyng Sinne*. William of Shoreham translated the whole of the Psalter into English prose about 1327, and wrote religious poems. The *Cursor Mundi*, written about 1320, and thought "the best book of all" by men of that time, was a metrical version of the Old and New Testament, interspersed, as was the *Handlyng Sinne*, with legends of saints. Some scattered Sermons, and in 1340 the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* (Remorse of Conscience), translated from the French, mark how *English prose* was rising through religion. About the same year Richard Rolle of Hampole wrote in Latin and in Northumbrian English for the "unlearned," a poem called the *Pricke of Conscience*, and some

prose treatises. The poem marks the close of the religious influence of the Friars. They had been attacked before in a poem of 1320; but in this poem there is not a word said against them. It is true the author, living far in the country, may not have been thrown much with them. Twenty years later however all is changed; and in the *Vision of Piers the Plowman*, the protest its writer makes for purity of life is also a protest against the foul life and the hypocrisy of the Friars. In that poem, as we shall see, the whole of the popular English religion of the time of Chaucer is represented. In it also the natural, unliterary, country English is best represented. It brings us up in the death of its author to the year 1400, the same year in which Chaucer died.

23. **History and the Story-telling Poetry.**—The Normans brought an historical taste with them to England, and created a most valuable historical literature. It was written in Latin, and we have nothing to do with it till story-telling grew out of it in the time of the Great Charter. But it was in itself of such importance that a few things must be said about it.

(1) **The men who wrote it** were called CHRONICLERS. At first they were mere annalists—that is, they jotted down the events of year after year without any attempt to bind them together into a connected whole. But afterwards, from the time of Henry I., another class of men arose, who wrote, not in scattered monasteries, but in the Court. Living at the centre of political life, their histories were written in a philosophic spirit, and wove into a whole the growth of law and national life and the story of affairs abroad. They are our great authorities for the history of these times. They begin with *William of Malmesbury*, whose book ends in 1142, and die out after *Matthew Paris*, 1235—73. Historical literature in England is only represented after the death of Henry III. by a

few dry Latin annalists till it rose again in modern English prose in 1513, when Sir Thomas More's *Life of Edward V. and Richard III.* is said to have been written.

(2) **A distinct English feeling** soon sprang up among these Norman historians. English patriotism was far from having died among the English themselves. The *Sayings of Ælfred* about 1200, were written in English by the English. These and some ballads, as well as the early English war songs, interested the Norman historians and were collected by them. William of Malmesbury, who was born of English and Norman parents, has sympathies with both peoples, and his history marks how both were becoming one nation. The same welding together of the conquered and the conquerors is seen in the others till we come to Matthew Paris, whose view of history is entirely that of an Englishman. When he wrote, Norman noble and English yeoman, Norman abbot and English priest, were, and are in his pages, one in blood and one in interests.

24. **English Story-telling** grew out of this historical literature. There was a Welsh priest at the court of Henry I., called GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH, who took upon himself to write history. He had been given, he said, an ancient Welsh book to translate which told in verse the history of Britain from the days when Brut, the great grandson of Æneas, landed on its shores, through the whole history of King Arthur and his Round Table down to Cadwallo, a Welsh king who died in 689. The Latin translation he made of this he called a history. The real historians were angry at the fiction, and declared that throughout the whole of it "he had lied saucily and shamelessly." It was indeed only a clever putting together of a number of Welsh legends, but it was *the beginning of story-telling* in our land. Everyone who read it was delighted with it; it made, as

we should say, a sensation, and as much on the Continent as in England. In it the Welsh had in some sort their revenge, for in its stories they invaded English literature, and their tales have never since ceased to live in it. They charm us as much in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* as they charmed us in the days of Henry I. But the stories Geoffrey of Monmouth told were in the Latin tongue. They were put first into French verse by Geoffrey Gaimar. They got afterwards to France and, added to from Breton legends, were made into a poem and decked out with the ornaments of French romance. In that form they came back to England as the work of *Wace*, a Norman trouveur, who called his poem the *Brut*, and completed it in 1155, shortly after the accession of Henry II.

25. **Layamon's "Brut."**—In this French form the story drifted through England, and at last falling into the hands of an English priest in Worcestershire, he resolved to tell it in English verse to his countrymen, and doing so became the author of our first English poem after the Conquest. We may roughly say that its date is 1205, ten years or so before the *Ormulum* was written, ten years before the Great Charter. It is plain that its composition, though it told a Welsh story, was looked on as a patriotic work by the writer. "There was a priest in the land," he writes of himself, "whose name was Layamon; he was son of Leovenath: May the Lord be gracious unto him! He dwelt at Earnley, a noble church on the bank of Severn, near Radstone, where he read books. It came in mind to him and in his chiefest thought that he would tell the noble deeds of England, what the men were named, and whence they came, who first had English land." And it was truly of great importance. The poem opened to the imagination of the English people an immense past for the history of the island they dwelt in, and made a common bond

of interest between Norman and Englishman. Though chiefly rendered from the French, there are not fifty Norman words in its more than 30,000 lines. The old English alliterative metre is kept up with a few rare rimes. As we read the short quick lines in which the battles are described, as we listen to the simple metaphors, and feel the strong, rude character of the poem, it is as if we were reading Cædmon; and what Cædmon was to early English poetry, Layamon is to English poetry after the Conquest. He is the first of the new singers.

26. **Story-telling grows French in form.**—After an interval the desire for story-telling increased in England. The story of *Genesis and Exodus* was versified about 1250, and in it and some others about the same date rimes are used. Many tales of Arthur's knights, and other tales which had an English origin, such as the lays of *Havelok the Dane* and of *King Horn* (about 1280) were translated from the French; Robert of Gloucester wrote his *Riming Chronicle*, 1298, and the *Romance of King Alexander*, about 1280, originally a Greek work, was adapted from the French into English. As the dates grow nearer to 1300, seven years before the death of Edward I., the amount of French words increases, and the French romantic manner of telling stories is more and more marked. In the *Lay of Havelok* the spirit and descriptions of the poem still resemble old English work; in the *Romance of Alexander*, on the other hand, the natural landscape, the conventional introductions to the parts, the gorgeous descriptions of pomps, and armour, and cities, the magic wonders, the manners, and feasts, and battles of chivalry, the love passages, are all steeped in the colours of French romantic poetry. Now this romance was adapted by a Frenchman in the year 1200. (?) It took therefore nearly a century before the French romantic manner of poetry could be naturalized in English; and it was naturalized, curious to

say, at the very time when England as a nation had lost its French elements and become entirely English. Finally, the influence of this French school in England is seen in the earlier poems of Chaucer, and in poems, such as the *Court of Love*, attributed to him. It came to its height and died in the translation of the *Romaunt of the Rose*, the last and crowning effort also of French romance. After that time the story-telling of England sought its subjects in another country than France. It turned to Italy.

27. **English Lyrics.**—In the midst of all this story-telling, like prophecies of what should afterwards be so lovely in our poetry, rose, no one can tell how, some lyric poems, country idylls, love songs, and, later on, some war songs. The English ballad, sung from town to town by wandering gleemen, had never altogether died. A number of rude ballads collected round the legendary *Robin Hood*, and the kind of poetic literature which sung of the outlaw and the forest, and afterwards so fully of the wild border life, gradually took form. About 1280 a beautiful little idyll, called *The Owl and the Nightingale*, was written in Dorsetshire, in which the author, Nicholas of Guildford, judges between the rival birds. In 1300 we meet with a few lyric poems, full of charm. They sing of springtime with its blossoms, of the woods ringing with the thrush and nightingale, of the flowers and the seemly sun, of country work, of the woes and joy of love, and many other delightful things. They are tinged with the colour of French romance, but they have an English background. We read nothing like them, except in Scotland, till we come to the Elizabethan time. After this, in 1352, the war lyrics of *Laurence Minot* sing the great deeds and battles of Edward III.

28. **The King's English.**—We have thus traced the rise of our English literature to the time of Chaucer. We must now complete the sketch by a word or two

on the language in which it was written. The literary English language seemed at first to be destroyed by the Conquest. It lingered till Stephen's death in the English Chronicle; a few traces of it are still found about Henry III.'s death in the *Brut* of Layamon. But, practically speaking, from the 12th century till the middle of the 14th there was no standard of English. The language, spoken only by the people, fell back into that broken state of anarchy in which each part of the country has its own dialect, and each writer uses the dialect of his own dwelling-place. All the poems then of which we have spoken were written in dialects of English, not in a fixed English common to all writers. French or Latin was the language of literature and of the literary class. But towards the middle of Edward the Third's reign English got the better of French. After the Black Death in 1349 French was less used; in 1362 English was made the language of the courts of law. At the same time a standard English language was born. It did not overthrow the dialects, for the *Vision of Piers the Plowman* and Wyclif's *Translation of the Bible* are both in a dialect; but it stood forth as the literary language in which all future English literature had to be written. It had been growing up in Robert of Brunne's work, and in the *Romance of King Alexander;* but it was fixed into clear form by Chaucer and Gower. It was in fact the English language talked in the Court and in the Court society to which these poets belonged. It was the King's English, and the fact that it was the tongue of the best and most cultivated society, as well as the great excellence of the works written in it by these poets, made it at once the tongue of literature.

29. **Religious Literature in Langland and Wyclif.**—We have traced the work of "transition English," as it has been called, along the lines of popular religion and story-telling. The first of these, in the realm of poetry, reaches its goal in the work of

William Langland; in the realm of prose it reaches its goal in Wyclif. In both these writers, the work differs from any that went before it, by its extraordinary power, and by the depth of its religious feeling. It is plain that it represented a society much more strongly moved by religion than that of the beginning of the fourteenth century. In Wyclif, the voice comes from the university, and it went all over the land in the body of preachers whom, like Wesley, he sent forth. In Langland's *Vision* we have a voice from the centre of the people themselves; his poem is written in a rude English dialect, in alliterative English verse, and in the old English manner. The very ploughboy could understand it. It became the book of those who desired social and Church reform. It was as eagerly read by the free labourers and fugitive serfs who collected round John Ball and Wat Tyler.

30. **Causes of the Religious Revival.**—It was originally due to the preaching of the Friars in the last century and to the noble example they set of devotion to the poor. When the Friars however became rich, though pretending to be poor, and impure of life, though pretending to goodness, the religious feeling they had stirred turned against themselves, and its two strongest cries, both on the Continent and in England, were for Truth, and for Purity, in life and in the Church.

Another cause common to the Continent and to England in this century was the movement for the equal rights of man against the class system of the middle ages. It was made a religious movement when men said that they were equal before God, and that goodness in His eyes was the only nobility. And it brought with it a religious protest against the oppression of the people by the class of the nobles.

There were two other causes, however, special to England at this time. One was the utter misery of the people owing to the French wars. Heavy taxation

fell upon them, and they were ground down by severe laws, which prevented them bettering themselves. They felt this all the more because so many of them had bought their freedom, and began to feel the delight of freedom. It was then that in their misery they turned to religion, not only as their only refuge, but as supplying them with reasons for a social revolution. The other cause was the Black Death, the great Plague which, in 1349, '62, and '69, swept over England. Grass grew in the towns; whole villages were left uninhabited; a wild panic fell upon the people, which was added to by a terrible tempest in 1362, that to men's minds told of the wrath of God. In their terror then, as well as in their pain, they fled to religion.

31. **Piers the Plowman.**—All these elements are to be found fully represented in the *Vision of Piers the Plowman*. Its author, William Langland, though we are not certain of his surname, was born about 1332, at Cleobury Mortimer, in Shropshire. His "Vision" begins with a description of his sleeping on the Malvern Hills, and the first text of it was probably written in the country in 1362. At the accession of Richard II., 1377, he was in London. The great popularity of his poem made him in that year, and again in the next year, send forth two more texts of his poem. In these texts he added to the original *Vision* the poems of *Do Wel*, *Do Bet*, and *Do Best*. In 1399, he wrote at Bristol his last poem, *The Deposition of Richard II.*, and then died, probably in 1400.

He paints his portrait as he was when he lived in Cornhill, a tall, gaunt figure, whom men called Long Will; clothed in the black robes in which he sung for a few pence at the funerals of the rich; hating to take his cap off his shaven head to bow to the lords and ladies that rode by in silver and furs as he stalked in observant moodiness along the Strand. It is this figure, which in indignant sorrow walks through the whole poem.

32. **His Vision.**—The dream of the "field full of folk," with which it begins, brings together nearly as many typical characters as the Tales of Chaucer do. In the first part, the Truth sought for is *righteous dealing* in Church, and Law, and State. In the second part, the Truth sought for is that of *righteous life*. None of those who wish to find Truth know the way, till Piers the Plowman, who at last enters the poem, directs them aright. The search for a righteous life is a search to *Do Well*, to *Do Better*, to *Do Best*, the three titles of the poems which were added afterwards. In a series of dreams, and a highly-wrought allegory, *Do Well*, *Do Better*, and *Do Best*, are identified with Jesus Christ, who appears at last as Love, in the dress of Piers the Plowman. The second of these poems describes Christ's death, His struggle with sin, His resurrection, and the victory over Death and the Devil. And the dreamer wakes in a transport of joy, with the Easter chimes pealing in his ears. But as Langland looked round on the world, the victory did not seem real, and the stern dreamer passed out of triumph into the dark sorrow in which he lived. He dreams again in *Do Best*, and sees, as Christ leaves the earth, the reign of Antichrist. Evils attack the Church and mankind. Envy, Pride, and Sloth, helped by the Friars, besiege Conscience. Conscience cries on Contrition to help him, but Contrition is asleep, and Conscience, all but despairing, grasps his pilgrim staff and sets out to wander over the world, praying for luck and health, "till he have Piers the Plowman," till he find the Saviour.

This is the poem which wrought so strongly in men's minds that its influence was almost as great as Wyclif's in the revolt which had now begun against Latin Christianity. Its fame was so great, that it produced imitators. In 1394, another alliterative poem was set forth by an unknown author, with the title of *Pierce the Plowman's Crede*, and the *Plowman's*

Tale attributed to Chaucer is another witness to the popularity of Langland.

33. **Wyclif.**—At the same time as the *Vision* was being read all over England, John Wyclif, about 1380, began his work in the English tongue with our first complete *translation of the Bible*, and in it did as much probably to fix our language as Chaucer did in his Tales. But he did much more than this for our tongue. He made it the popular language of religious thought and feeling. In 1381 he was in full battle with the Church on the doctrine of transubstantiation, and was condemned to silence. He replied by appealing to the whole of England in the speech of the people. He sent forth tract after tract, sermon after sermon, couched not in the dry, philosophic style of the schoolmen, but in short, sharp, stinging sentences, full of the homely words used in his own Bible, denying one by one almost all the doctrines, and denouncing the practices, of the Church of Rome. He was our first Protestant. It was a new literary vein to open, the vein of the pamphleteer. With his work then, and with Langland's, we bring to the year 1400 the English prose and poetry pertaining to religion which we have been tracing since the Conquest.

34. **Story-telling** is the other line on which we have placed our literature, and it is represented first by JOHN GOWER. He belongs to a school older than Chaucer, inasmuch as he is never touched by the Italian, only by the French influence. He belongs to a different school even as an artist; for his tales are not pure story-telling like Chaucer's, but tales with a special moral. Partly the religious and social reformer, and partly the story-teller, he represents a transition and fills up the intellectual space between Langland and Chaucer. In the church of St. Saviour, at Southwark, his head is still seen resting on his three great works, the *Speculum Meditantis*, the *Vox*

Clamantis, the *Confessio Amantis*, 1393. It marks the unsettled state of our literary language, that each of these was written in a different tongue, the first in French, the second in Latin, the third in English.

The third is his English work. In 30,000 lines or more, he mingles up allegory, morality, the sciences, the philosophy of Aristotle, all the studies of the day, with comic or tragic tales as illustrations. We have seen that Robert de Brunne was the first to do this; Gower was the second. The tales are wearisome and long, and the smoothness of the verse makes them more wearisome. Gower was a careful writer of English; and in his satire of evils, and in his grave reproof of the follies of Richard II., he rises into his best strain. The king himself, even though reproved, was a patron of the poet. It was as Gower was rowing on the Thames that the royal barge drew near, and he was called to the king's side. "Book some new thing," said the king, "in the way you are used, into which book I myself may often look;" and the request was the origin of the *Confession of a Lover*. It is with pleasure that we turn from the learned man of talent to Geoffrey Chaucer—to the genius who called Gower, with perhaps some of the irony of an artist, "the moral Gower."

35. **Chaucer's French Period.**—Geoffrey Chaucer was the son of a vintner, of Thames Street, London, and was born, it is now believed, in 1340. He lived almost all his life in London, in the centre of its work and society. When he was sixteen he became page to the wife of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, and continued at the Court till he joined the army in France in 1359. He was taken prisoner, but was ransomed at the treaty of Bretigny, in 1360. We then know nothing of his life for six years; but from items in the Exchequer Rolls, we find that he was again connected with the Court, from 1366 to 1372. It was during this time that he began to write. His first

poem may have been the A, B, C, a prayer Englished from the French at the request of the Duchess Blanche. The translation of the *Romaunt of the Rose* has been attributed to him, but the best critics are doubtful of, or deny, his authorship. They are only sure of two poems, the *Compleynte to Pity* in 1368, and in the next year the *Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse*, whose husband, John of Gaunt, was Chaucer's patron. These, being written under the influence of French poetry, are classed under the name of Chaucer's first period. There are lines in them which seem to speak of a luckless love affair, and in this broken love it has been supposed we find the key to Chaucer's early life.

36. **Chaucer's Italian Period.** — Chaucer's second poetic period may be called the period of Italian influence, from 1372 to 1384. During these years he went for the king on no less than seven diplomatic missions. Three of these, in 1372, '74, and '78, were to Italy. At that time the great Italian literature which inspired then, and still inspires, European literature, had reached full growth, and it opened to Chaucer a new world of art. If he read the *Vita Nuova*, and the *Divina Commedia* of Dante, he knew for the first time the power and range of poetry. He read the Sonnets of Petrarca, and he learnt what is meant by "form" in poetry. He read the tales of Boccaccio who made Italian prose, and in them he first saw how to tell a story exquisitely. Petrarca and Boccaccio he may even have met, for they died in 1374 and 1375, but he never saw Dante, who died at Ravenna in 1321. When he came back from these journeys he was a new man. He threw aside the romantic poetry of France, and laughed at it in his gay and kindly manner in the *Rime of Sir Thopas*, afterwards made one of the *Canterbury Tales*. His chief work of this time bears witness to the influence of Italy. It was *Troylus and Creseide*, 1382 (?), which is a translation, with many changes and additions, of the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio. The additions (and he nearly doubled the poem) are stamped with his own peculiar tenderness, vividness, and simplicity. His changes from the original are all towards the side of purity, good taste, and piety. We meet the further influence of Boccaccio in the birth of some of the *Canterbury Tales*, and of Petrarca in the Tales themselves. To this time is now referred the tale of the Second Nun, that of the Doctor, the Man of Law, the Clerk, the Prioress, the Squire, the Franklin, Sir Thopas, and the first draft of the Knight's Tale, borrowed, but very slightly, from the *Teseide* of Boccaccio. The other poems of this period were the *Parlament of Foules*, the *Compleynt of Mars*, *Anelida and Arcite*, *Boece*, and *the Former Age*, all between 1374 and '76, the *lines to Adam Scrivener*, 1383, and the *Hous of Fame*, 1384 (?). In the passion with which Chaucer describes the ruined love of Troilus and Anelida, some have traced the lingering sorrow of his early love affair. But if this be true, it was now passing away, for in the creation of Pandarus in the *Troilus*, and in the delightful fun of the *Parlament of Foules*, a new Chaucer appears, the humorous poet of the *Canterbury Tales*. In the active business life he led during this period he was likely to grow out of mere sentiment, for he was not only employed on service abroad, but also at home. In 1374 he was Comptroller of the Wool Customs, in 1382 of the Petty Customs, and in 1386 Member of Parliament for Kent.

37. **Chaucer's English Period.**—It is in the next period, from 1384 to 1390, that he left behind Italian influence as he had left French, and became entirely himself, entirely English. The comparative poverty in which he now lived, and the loss of his offices, for in John of Gaunt's absence he lost Court favour, may have given him more time for study, and the retired life of a poet. At least in

his *Legende of Good Women*, the prologue to which was written in 1385, we find him a closer student than ever of books and of nature. His appointment as Clerk of the Works in 1389 brought him again into contact with men. He superintended the repairs and building at the Palace of Westminster, the Tower, and St. George's Chapel, Windsor, till July, 1391, when he was superseded, and lived on pensions allotted to him by Richard and by Henry IV., after he had sent the King in 1399 his *Compleint to his Purse*. Before 1390, however, he had added to his great work its best tales, those of the Miller, the Reeve, the Cook, the Wife of Bath, the Merchant, the Friar, the Nun, Priest, Pardoner, and perhaps the Sompnour. The Prologue was probably written in 1388. In these, in their humour, in their vividness of portraiture, in their ease of narration, and in the variety of their characters, Chaucer shines supreme. A few smaller poems belong to this best time, such as *Truth* and the *Moder of God*.

During the last ten years of his life, which may be called the period of his decay, he wrote some small poems, and along with the *Compleynte of Venus*, and a prose treatise on the Astrolabe, five more tales, the Canon's, Yeoman's, Manciple's, Monk's, and Parsone's. The last was written the year of his death, 1400. Having done this work, he died in a house under the shadow of the Abbey of Westminster. Within the walls of the Abbey Church, the first of the poets who lies there, that "sacred and happy spirit" sleeps.

38. **Chaucer's Character.**—Born of the tradesman class, Chaucer was in every sense of the word one of our finest gentlemen: tender, graceful in thought, glad of heart, humourous, and satirical without unkindness; sensitive to every change of feeling in himself and others, and therefore full of sympathy; brave in misfortune, even to mirth, and doing well

and with careful honesty all he undertook. His first and great delight was in human nature, and he makes us love the noble characters in his poems and feel with kindliness towards the baser and ruder sort. He never sneers, for he had a wide charity, and we can always smile in his pages at the follies and forgive the sins of men. He had a true and chivalrous regard for women, and his wife and he must have been very happy if they fulfilled the ideal he had of marriage. He lived in aristocratic society, and yet he thought him the greatest gentleman who was "most vertuous alway, privé, and pert (open), and most entendeth aye to do the gentil dedes that he can." He lived frankly among men, and as we have seen, saw many different types of men, and in his own time filled many parts as a man of the world and of business. Yet, with all this active and observant life, he was commonly very quiet and kept much to himself. The Host in the Tales japes at him for his lonely, abstracted air. "Thou lookest as thou wouldest find a hare, And ever on the ground I see thee stare." Being a good scholar, he read morning and night alone, and he says that after his (office) work he would go home and sit at another book as dumb as a stone, till his look was dazed. While at study and when he was making of songs and ditties, "nothing else that God had made" had any interest for him. There was but one thing that roused him then, and that too he liked to enjoy alone. It was the beauty of the morning and the fields, the woods, and streams, and flowers, and the singing of the little birds. This made his heart full of revel and solace, and when spring came after winter, he rose with the lark and cried, "Farewell my book and my devotion." He was the first who made the love of nature a distinct element in our poetry. He was the first who, in spending the whole day gazing alone on the daisy, set going that lonely delight in natural scenery which is so special a mark of our

later poets. He lived thus a double life, in and out of the world, but never a gloomy one. For he was fond of mirth and good-living, and when he grew towards age, was portly of waist, "no poppet to embrace." But he kept to the end his elvish countenance, the shy, delicate, half mischievous face which looked on men from its grey hair and forked beard, and was set off by his light grey-coloured dress and hood. A knife and inkhorn hung on his dress, we see a rosary in his hand, and when he was alone he walked swiftly.

39. **The Canterbury Tales.**—Of his work it is not easy to speak briefly, because of its great variety. Enough has been said of it, with the exception of his most complete creation, the *Canterbury Tales*. It will be seen from the dates given above that they were not written at one time. They are not, and cannot be looked on as a whole. Many were written independently, and then fitted into the framework of the Prologue in 1388. At that time a number more were written, and the rest added at intervals till his death. In fact, the whole thing was done much in the same way as Mr. Tennyson has written his *Idylls of the King*. The manner in which he knitted them together was very simple and likely to please English people. The holiday excursions of the time were the pilgrimages, and the most famous and the pleasantest pilgrimage to go, especially for Londoners, was the three or four days' journey to see the shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury. Persons of all ranks in life met and travelled together, starting from a London inn. Chaucer seized on this as the frame in which to set his pictures of life. He grouped around the jovial host of the Tabard Inn men and women of every class of society in England, set them on horseback to ride to Canterbury, and made each of them tell a tale. No one could hit off a character better, and in

his Prologue, and in the prologues to the several Tales, the whole of the new, vigorous English society which had grown up since Edward I. is painted with astonishing vividness. "I see all the pilgrims in the Canterbury Tales," says Dryden, "their humours, their features, and the very dress, as distinctly as if I had supped with them at the Tabard in Southwark." The Tales themselves take in the whole range of the poetry of the middle ages; the legend of the saint, the romance of the Knight, the wonderful fables of the traveller, the coarse tale of common life, the love story, the allegory, the satirical lay, and the apologue. And they are pure tales. He has been said to have had dramatic power, but he has none. He is simply our greatest story-teller in verse. All the best tales are told easily, sincerely, with great grace, and yet with so much homeliness, that a child would understand them. Sometimes his humour is broad, sometimes sly, sometimes gay, sometimes he brings tears into our eyes, and he can make us smile or be sad as he pleases.

He had a very fine ear for the music of verse, and the tale and the verse go together like voice and music. Indeed, so softly flowing and bright are they, that to read them is like listening in a meadow full of sunshine to a clear stream rippling over its bed of pebbles. The English in which they are written is almost the English of our time; and it is literary English. Chaucer made our tongue into a true means of poetry. He did more, he welded together the French and English elements in our language and made them into one English tool for the use of literature, and all our prose writers and poets derive their tongue from the language of the *Canterbury Tales*. They give him honour for this, but still more for that he was the first English artist. Poetry is an art, and the artist in poetry is one who writes for pure pleasure and for nothing else the thing he

writes, and who desires to give to others the same fine pleasure by his poems which he had in writing them. The thing he most cares about is that the form in which he puts his thoughts or feelings may be perfectly fitting to the subject, and as beautiful as possible—but for this he cares very greatly; and in this Chaucer stands apart from the other poets of his time. Gower wrote with a moral object, and nothing can be worse than the form in which he puts his tales. The author of *Piers the Plowman* wrote with the object of reform in social and ecclesiastical affairs, and his form is uncouth and harsh. Chaucer wrote because he was full of emotion and joy in his own thoughts, and thought that others would weep and be glad with him, and the only time he ever moralizes is in the tales of the Yeoman and the Manciple, written in his decay. He has, then, the best right to the poet's name. He is our first English artist.

40. **Mandeville.**—I have already noticed the prose of Wyclif under the religious class of English work. I have kept Sir John Mandeville for this place, because he belongs to light literature. He is called our "first writer in formed English." Chaucer himself however wrote some things, and especially one of his Tales, in rhythmical prose, and John of Trevisa translated into English prose, 1387, Higden's *Polychronicon*. Mandeville wrote his *Travels* first in Latin, then in French, and finally put them into our tongue about 1356, "that every man of the nation might understand them." His quaint delight in telling his "traveller's tales," and sometimes the grace with which he tells them, rank him among the story-tellers of England.

CHAPTER III.

FROM CHAUCER, 1400, TO ELIZABETH, 1559.

Thomas Occleve (Henry V.'s reign); J. Lydgate, *Falls of Princes* (in Henry VI.).—Sir John Fortescue's prose work, and Sir T. Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (Edward IV.).—Caxton's prints at Westminster, 1477.—Paston Letters, 1422—1505.—Hawes' *Pastime of Pleasure*, 1506.—John Skelton's poems, 1508—1529.—Sir T. More's *History of Richard III.*, 1513.—Tyndale's *Translation of the Bible*, 1525.—*English Prayer Book*, 1549.—Ascham's *Toxophilus*, 1545.—Poems of Wyatt and Surrey, in *Tottel's Miscellany*, 1557.

SCOTTISH POETRY, begins with Barbour's *Bruce*, 1375-7; James I.'s *King's Quhair*, 1424.—T. Henryson dies, 1508.—Dunbar's *Thistle and Rose*, 1503.—Gawin Douglas dies, 1522.—Sir D. Lyndsay born, 1490; *Satire of Three Estates*, 1536; dies 1555.

41. **The Fifteenth Century Prose.**—The last poems of Chaucer and Langland bring our story up to the year 1400. The century that followed is the most barren in our literature. History sank down into a few Latin chroniclers, of whom *Thomas of Walsingham* is best known. Two *Riming Chronicles* were written in Henry V.'s time by Andrew of Wyntoun, a Scotchman, and John Harding, an Englishman. John Capgrave wrote in English, in Edward IV.'s reign, a *Chronicle of England* which began with the Creation. Political prose is then represented by SIR JOHN FORTESCUE'S book on the *Difference between Absolute and Limited Monarchy*. It is our second important book in the history of English prose. The religious war between the Lollards and the Church went on during the reign of Henry V. and VI., and in the reign of the latter, REGINALD PECOCK took it out of Latin into homely English. He fought the Lollards with their own

writes, and who desires to give to others the same fine pleasure by his poems which he had in writing them. The thing he most cares about is that the form in which he puts his thoughts or feelings may be perfectly fitting to the subject, and as beautiful as possible—but for this he cares very greatly; and in this Chaucer stands apart from the other poets of his time. Gower wrote with a moral object, and nothing can be worse than the form in which he puts his tales. The author of *Piers the Plowman* wrote with the object of reform in social and ecclesiastical affairs, and his form is uncouth and harsh. Chaucer wrote because he was full of emotion and joy in his own thoughts, and thought that others would weep and be glad with him, and the only time he ever moralizes is in the tales of the Yeoman and the Manciple, written in his decay. He has, then, the best right to the poet's name. He is our first English artist.

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weapons, with public sermons in English, and with tracts in English; and after 1449, when Bishop of Chichester, published his work, *The Repressor of overmuch Blaming of the Clergy*. It pleased neither party. The Lollards disliked it because it defended the customs and doctrines of the Church. Churchmen burnt it because it agreed with the "Bible-men," that the Bible was the only rule of faith. Both abjured it because it said that doctrines were to be proved from the Bible by reason. Pecock is the first of all the Church theologians who wrote in English, and the book is a fine example of our early prose.

42. **Poetical Literature.**—The only literature which reached any strength was poetical, but even that is almost wholly confined to the reign of Henry VI. The new day of poetry still went on, but its noon in Chaucer was now succeeded by the grey afternoon of Lydgate, and the dull twilight of Occleve. JOHN LYDGATE, a monk of Bury, who was thirty years of age when Chaucer died, wrote nothing of importance till Henry VI.'s reign. Though a long-winded and third-rate poet, he was a delightful man; fresh, natural, and happy even to his old age when he recalls himself as a boy, "weeping for nought, and anon after glad." There was scarcely any literary work he could not do. He rimed history, ballads, and legends, till the monastery was delighted. He made pageants for Henry VI., masks and May-games for aldermen, mummeries for the Lord Mayor, and satirical ballads on the follies of the day. Educated at Oxford, a traveller in France and Italy, he knew all the literature of his time, and he even dabbled in the sciences. He enjoyed everything, and if the *Flower and the Leaf*, usually attributed to Chaucer, be by him, it proves that which his other poems confirm, that he was as much a lover of nature as Chaucer. It is his story-telling which brings him closest to Chaucer. His three chief poems

were the *Falls of Princes*, *The Storie of Thebes*, and the *Troye Book*. The first is a translation of a book of Boccaccio's. It tells the tragic fates of great men from the time of Adam to the capture of King John of France, at Poitiers. There is a touch of the drama in the plan, which was suggested by the pageants of the time. The dead princes appear before Boccaccio, pensive in his library, and each relates his downfall. The *Storie of Thebes* is an additional Canterbury Tale, and the *Troye Book* is a version from the French of the prose romance of Guido della Colonna, a Sicilian poet, if the book be not in truth originally French. The *Complaint of the Black Knight*, usually given to Chaucer, is stated to be Lydgate's by Shirley, the contemporary of him and Chaucer. I should like to be able to call him the author of the pretty little poem called the *Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, included in Chaucer's works. But its authorship is unknown.

THOMAS OCCLEVE, who wrote chiefly in Henry V.'s reign, about 1420, was nothing but a bad versifier. His one merit is that he loved Chaucer. With his loss "the whole land smartith," he says, and he breaks out into a kind of rapture once:—

> "Thou wert acquainted with Chaucer! Pardie,
> God save his soul,
> The first finder of our faire langage."

And it is in the MS. of his longest poem, *The Governail of Princes* that he caused to be drawn, with "fond idolatry," the portrait of his master. With this long piece of verse we mark the decay of the poetry of England. Romances and lays were still translated; there were verses written on such subjects as hunting and alchemy. Caxton himself produced a poem; but the only thing here worth noticing is that at the end of the century some of our ballads were printed.

43. **Ballads**, lays, fragments of romances, had been sung in England from the earliest times, and popular

tales and jokes took form in short lyric pieces to be accompanied by music and dancing. We have seen war celebrated in Minot's songs, and the political ballad is represented by the lampoon made by some follower of Simon de Montfort, on the day of the battle of Lewes, and by the *Elegy on Edward I.'s Death*. But the ballad went over the whole land among the people. The trader, the apprentices, and poor of the cities, the peasantry, had their own songs. They tended to collect themselves round some legendary name like Robin Hood, or some historical character made legendary, like Randolf, Earl of Chester. Sloth, in *Piers Plowman's Vision*, does not know his paternoster, but he does know the rimes of these heroes. A crowd of minstrels sang them through city and village. The very friar sang them "and made his Englissch swete upon his tunge." A collection of Robin Hood ballads was soon printed under the title of *A Lytel Geste of Robin Hood*, by Wynken de Worde. *The Nut Brown Maid*, *The Battle of Otterburn*, and *Chevy Chase*, may belong to the end of the century, though probably not in the form we possess them. It was not however till much later that any collection of ballads was made; and few, as we possess them, can be dated farther back than the reign of Elizabeth.

44. **Growth of interest in Literature.**—This was then the literature of this century. Little creative work was done, and that little was poor. There was small learning in the monasteries, and few books were written. But a good deal of interest in literature was scattered about the country, and it increased as the century went on. The Wars of the Roses stopped the writing, but not the reading, of books. We have in the *Paston Letters*, 1422-1505—the correspondence of a country family from Henry VI. to Henry VII., pleasantly, even correctly written—passages which refer to translations of the classics, and to manuscripts being sent to and fro for reading. Henry VI.,

Edward IV., and some of the great nobles were lovers of books. Men like Duke Humphrey of Gloucester made libraries and brought over Italian scholars to England to translate Greek works. There were fine scholars in England, like John Lord Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, who had won fame in the schools of Italy. Before 1474, when Caxton finished the first book said to have been printed in this country, *The Game and Playe of the Chesse*, a number of French translations of the Latin authors were widely read. There was, therefore, in England, a general, though an uninformed interest in the ancient writers.

45. **First Influence of the Italian Revival.**—Such an interest was added to by the revival of letters which arose at this time in Italy, and the sixteenth century had not long begun before many Englishmen went to Italy to read and study the old Greek authors on whom the scholars driven from Constantinople by the Turks were lecturing in the schools of Florence. Printing enabled these men on their return to turn the classic books they loved into English for the English people. We began to do our own work as translators; and from the time of Henry VIII. onwards, there is scarcely any literary fury equal to that with which the young English scholars fell upon the ancient authors and filled the land with English versions of them. It is, then, in the slow upgrowth during this century of interest in and study of the ancients that we are to see the gathering together at its source of one of the streams which fed that great river of Elizabethan literature which it is so great a mistake to think burst suddenly up through the earth.

46. **Influence of Caxton's Work.**—We find another of these sources in the work of our first printer, William Caxton. The first book that bears the inscription: "Imprynted by me, William Caxton, at Westmynstre" is *The Dicles and Sayings of*

Philosophers. Caxton did little or nothing for classical learning. His translation of the *Æneid* of Vergil is from a contemptible French romance. But he preserved for us Chaucer, and Lydgate, and Gower, with zealous care. He printed the Chronicles of Brut and Higden; he translated the *Golden Legend*: and the *Morte d'Arthur*, written by Sir Thomas Malory in the reign of Edward IV., and one of our finest and simplest examples of early prose, was printed by him with all the care of one who loved "the noble acts of chivalry." He had a tradesman's interest in publishing the romances, for they were the reading of the day, but he could scarcely have done better for the interests of the coming literature. These books nourished the imagination of England, and supplied poet after poet with fine subjects for work, or fine frames for their subjects. He had not a tradesman's, but a loving literary interest in printing the old English poets; and in sending them out from his press Caxton kept up the continuity of English poetry. The poets after him at once began on the models of Chaucer and Gower and Lydgate; and the books themselves, being more widely read, not only made poets but a public that loved poetry. If classic literature then was one of the sources in this century of the Elizabethan literature, the recovery of old English poetry was another.

47. **Prose Literature.**—With the exception of Caxton's work all the good prose of the fifteenth century was written before the death of Edward IV. The reigns of Richard III. and of Henry VII. produced no prose of any value, but the country awakened from its dulness with the accession of Henry VIII., 1509. A band of new scholars who had studied in Italy taught Greek in Oxford, Cambridge and London. John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's, with John Lilly, the grammarian, set on foot a school where the classics were taught in a new and practical

way. Erasmus, who had all the enthusiasm which sets others on fire, came to England, and with Grocyn, Linacre, Sir Thomas More, and Archbishop Warham formed a centre from which a liberal and wise theology was spread. The new learning which had been born in Italy came to England. It stirred and gave life to everything, and it woke up English Prose from its sleep. Much of the new life of English Literature was due to the patronage of the young king. It was Henry VIII. who supported Sir Thomas Elyot, and encouraged him to write books in the vulgar tongue that he might delight his countrymen. It was the king who asked Lord Berners to translate Froissart, a book which "made a landmark in our tongue," and who made Leland, our first English writer on antiquarian subjects, the "King's Antiquary." It was the king to whom Roger Ascham dedicated his first work, 1545, and the king sent him abroad to pursue his studies. This book, the *Toxophilus*, or the *School of Shooting*, 1545, was written for the pleasure of the yeomen and gentlemen of England in their own tongue. Ascham apologizes for this, and the apology marks the state of English prose. "Everything has been done excellently in Greek and Latin, but in the English tongue so meanly that no man can do worse." He has done his work well, and in quaint but charming English.

48. **Prose and the Reformation.**—But the man who did best in English prose was Sir Thomas More in our earliest English history, the *History of Edward V. and Richard III.* The simplicity of his genius showed itself in the style, and his wit in the picturesque method and the dramatic dialogue that graced the book. English prose grew larger and richer under his pen, and began that stately step which future historians followed. The work is said to have been written in 1513 but it was not printed till 1557. The most famous book More wrote, *The Utopia*, was not

written in English. The most famous controversy he had was with JOHN TYNDALE, a man who in his *translation of the New Testament*, 1525, "fixed our tongue once for all." His style was as purely English as More's, and of what kind it was may be read in our Bibles, for our authorized version is still in great part his translation. In this work Tyndale was assisted by William Roy, a runaway friar, and his friend Rogers, the first martyr in Queen Mary's reign, added to it a translation of the *Apocrypha*, and made up what was wanting in Tyndale's translation from Chronicles to Malachi out of Coverdale's translation. It was this Bible which, revised by Coverdale and edited and re-edited as *Cromwell's Bible*, 1539, and again as *Cranmer's Bible*, 1540, was set up in every parish church in England. It got north into Scotland and made the Lowland English more like the London English, and after its revisal in 1611 went with the Puritan fathers to New England and fixed the standard of English in America. There is no book which has had so great an influence on the style of English literature. In Edward VI.'s reign also Cranmer edited the *English Prayer Book*, 1549-52. Its English is a good deal mixed with Latin words, and its style is some times weak and heavy, but on the whole it is a fine example of stately prose. LATIMER, on the contrary, whose *Sermon on the Ploughers* and others were delivered in 1549 and in 1552, wrote in a plain, shrewd style, which by its humour and rude directness made him the first preacher of his day.

49. **Poetry in the Sixteenth Century under the Influence of Chaucer.**—We shall speak in this section only of the poets in England whose work was due to the publication of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate by Caxton, and go back also to the Scotch poetry which owed itself to the impulse of Chaucer. After a short revival that influence died, and a new one entered from Italy into English verse in the poems of Surrey

and Wyatt. The transition period between the one influence and the other is of great interest. We see how the old poets had been neglected by the way in which the new poets speak of them, as of something wonderful, and by the indignant reproach a man like Hawes makes when he says that people care for nothing but ballads, and will not read these old books. But the reproach was unwise. It is better to make a new ballad than to read an old poem, and the ballads of England kept up the original vein of poetry of the land. It is one of the signs of a new poetic life in a nation when it is fond of poetry which, like the ballad, has to do with the human interests of the present: and when that kind of human poetry pleases the upper classes as well as the lower a resurrection of poetry is at hand.

50. **Hawes and Skelton.**—At such a time we are likely to find imitators of the old work, and in the reign of Henry VII. STEPHEN HAWES recast a poem of Lydgate's (?) *The Temple of Glass*, and imitated Chaucer's work and the old allegory in his *Pastime of Pleasure*, 1506. We shall also find men who, while they still follow the old, leave it for an original line, because they are more moved by human life in the present than in the past. Their work will be popular, it may even resemble the form of the ballad. Such a man was JOHN SKELTON, who wrote in Henry VII. and Henry VIII.'s reign, and died 1529. His earliest poems were after the manner of Chaucer, but he soon took a manner of his own, and being greatly excited by the cry of the people for Church reformation, wrote a bitter satire on Wolsey for his pride, and on the clergy for their luxury. His poem *Why come ye not to Court?* was a fierce satire on the great Cardinal. That of *Colin Clout* was also the cry of the country Colin, and of the Clout or mechanic of the town against the corruption of the Church. Both are written in short "rude rayling

rimes, pleasing only the popular ear," and Skelton chose them for that purpose. Both have a rough, impetuous power; their language is coarse, full even of slang, but Skelton could use any language he pleased. He was an admirable scholar. Erasmus calls him the "glory and light of English letters," and Caxton says that he improved our language. *Colin Clout* represents the whole popular feeling of the time just before the movement of the Reformation took a new turn by the opposition of the Pope to Henry's divorce. It was not only in this satirical vein that Skelton wrote. We owe to him some pretty and new love lyrics; and the *Boke of Phyllyp Sparowe*, which tells the grief of a nun called Jane Scrope for the death of her sparrow, is one of the gayest and most inventive poems in the language. Skelton stands quite alone between the last flicker of the influence of Chaucer, whose last true imitator he was, and the rise of a new Italian influence in England in the poems of Surrey and Wyatt. In his own special work he was entirely original, and standing thus between two periods of poetry, he is a kind of landmark in English literature. The *Ship of Fooles*, 1508, by Barclay is of this time, but it has no value. It is a recast of a work published at Basel, and was popular because it attacked the follies and questions of the time. It was written in Chaucer's stanza. But far better work in poetry was being done at this time in Scotland than in England.

SCOTTISH POETRY.

51. **Scottish Poetry** is poetry written in the English tongue by men living in Scotland. These men though calling themselves Scotchmen are of good English blood. But the blood, as I think, was mixed with an infusion of Celtic blood.

Old Northumbria extended from the Humber to the Firth of Forth, leaving however on its western border a line of unconquered land, which took in Lancashire, Cumberland, and Westmoreland in our England, and over the border most of the western country between the Clyde and Solway Firth. This unconquered country was the Welsh kingdom of Strathclyde, and it was dwelt in by the Celtic race. The present English part of it was soon conquered and the Celts driven out. But in the part to the north of the Solway Firth the Celts were not driven out. They remained, lived with the Englishmen who were settled over the old Northumbria, inter-married with them and became under Scot kings one mixed people. Literature in the Lowlands then would have Celtic elements in it; literature in England was purely Teutonic. The one sprang from a mixed, the other from an unmixed race. I draw attention to this, because it seems to me to account for certain peculiarities in Scottish poetry which colour the whole of it, which rule over it, and are specially Celtic.

52. **Celtic Elements of Scottish Poetry.**—The first of these is *the love of wild nature for its own sake*. There is a passionate, close, and poetical observation and description of natural scenery in Scotland from the earliest times of its poetry, such as we do not possess in English poetry till the time of Wordsworth. The second is *the love of colour*. All early Scottish poetry differs from English in the extraordinary way in which colour is insisted on, and at times in the lavish exaggeration of it. The third is *the wittier, more rollicking humour* in the Scottish poetry, which is distinctly Celtic in contrast with that humour which has its root in sadness and which belongs to the Teutonic races. Few things are really more different than the humour of Chaucer and the humour of Dunbar, than the humour of Cowper and the humour of Burns. These are the special Celtic elements in the Lowland poetry.

53. **Its National Elements** came into it from the circumstances under which Scotland rose into a separate kingdom. The first of these is the strong, almost fierce assertion of national life. The English were as national as the Scots, and felt the emotion of patriotism as strongly. But they had no need to assert it; they were not oppressed. But for nearly forty years the Scotch resisted for their very life the efforts of England to conquer them. And the war of freedom left its traces on their poetry from Barbour to Burns and Walter Scott in the almost obtrusive way in which Scotland, and Scottish liberty, and Scottish heroes are thrust forward in their verse. Their passionate nationality appears in another form in their descriptive poetry. The natural description of Chaucer, Shakespeare, or even Milton, is not distinctively English. But in Scotland it is always the scenery of their own land that the poets describe. Even when they are imitating Chaucer, they do not imitate his conventional landscape. They put in a Scotch landscape, and in the work of such men as Gawin Douglas the love of Scotland and the love of nature mingle their influences together to make him sit down, as it were, to paint, with his eye on everything he paints, a series of Scotch landscapes. It is done without any artistic composition; it reads like a catalogue, but it is work which stands quite alone at the time he wrote. There is nothing even resembling it in England for centuries after.

54. **Its Individual Element.**—There is one more special element in early Scottish poetry which arose, I think, out of its political circumstances. All through the struggle for freedom, carried on as it was at first by small bands under separate leaders till they all came together under a leader like Bruce, a much greater amount of individuality, and a greater habit of it, was created among the Scotch than among the English. Men fought for

their own land and lived in their own way. Every little border chieftain, almost every border farmer was or felt himself to be his own master. The poets would be likely to share in this individual quality, and in spite of the overpowering influence of Chaucer, to strike out new veins of poetic thought and new methods of poetic expression. And this is what happened. Long before forms of poetry like the short pastoral or the fable had appeared in England, the Scottish poets had started them. They were less docile imitators than the English, but their work in the new forms they started was not so good as the after English work in the same forms.

55. The first of the Scottish poets, omitting Thomas of Erceldoune, is JOHN BARBOUR, Archdeacon of Aberdeen. His long poem of *The Bruce* represents the whole of the eager struggle for Scottish freedom against the English which closed at Bannockburn; and the national spirit, which I have mentioned, springs in it, full grown, into life. But it is temperate, it does not pass into the fury against England which is so plain in writers like Blind Harry, who, about 1461, composed a long poem in the heroic couplet of Chaucer on the deeds of *William Wallace*. Barbour was often in England for the sake of study, and his patriotism though strong is tolerant of England. The date of his poem is 1375, 7; it never mentions Chaucer, and Barbour is the only early Scottish poet on whom Chaucer had no influence. In the next poet we find the influence of Chaucer, and it is hereafter continuous till the Elizabethan time. JAMES THE FIRST of Scotland was prisoner in England for nineteen years, till 1422. There he read Chaucer, and fell in love with Lady Jane Beaufort, niece of Henry the Fourth. The poem which he wrote—*The King's Quhair* (the quire or book)—is done in imitation of Chaucer, and in Chaucer's seven-lined stanza, which from James's use of it is called Rime

Royal. In six cantos, sweeter, tenderer and purer than any verse till we come to Spenser, he describes the beginning of his love and its happy end. "I must write, he says, "so much because I have come so from Hell to Heaven." Nor did the flower of his love and hers ever fade. She defended him in the last ghastly scene of murder when his kingly life ended. There is something especially pathetic in the lover of Chaucer, in the first poet of sentiment in Scotland being slain so cruelly. He was no blind imitator of Chaucer. We are conscious at once of an original element in his work. The natural description is more varied, the colour is more vivid, and there is a modern self-reflective quality, a touch of spiritual feeling which does not belong to Chaucer at all. The poems of *The Kirk on the Green* and *Peebles to the Play* have been attributed to him. If they be his, he originated a new vein of poetry, which Burns afterwards carried out—the comic and satirical ballad poem. But they are more likely to be by James V.

ROBERT HENRYSON, who died before 1508, a schoolmaster in Dunfermline, was also an imitator of Chaucer, and his *Testament of Cresseid* continues Chaucer's *Troilus*. But he set on foot two new forms of poetry. He made poems out of the *fables*. They differ entirely from the short, neat form in which Gay and La Fontaine treated the fable. They are long stories, full of pleasant dialogue, political allusions, and with elaborate morals attached to them. They have a peculiar Scottish tang, and are full of descriptions of Scotch scenery. He also began the short pastoral in his *Robin and Makyne*. It is a natural, prettily turned dialogue; and a subtle Celtic wit, such as charms us in *Duncan Grey*, runs through it. The individuality which struck out two original lines of poetic work in these poems appears again in his sketch of the graces of womanhood in the *Garment of Good Ladies;* a poem of the same type as those thoughtful lyrics which

describe what is best in certain phases of professions, or life, such as Sir H. Wotton's *Character of a Happy Life*, or Wordsworth's *Happy Warrior*.

But among lesser men, whom we need not mention, the greatest is WILLIAM DUNBAR. He carries the influence of Chaucer on to the end of the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth. Few have possessed a more masculine genius, and its work was as varied in its range as it was original. He followed the form and plan of Chaucer in his two poems of *The Thistle and the Rose*, 1503, and *The Golden Terge*, 1508, the first on the marriage of James IV. to Margaret Tudor, the second an allegory of Love, Beauty, Reason, and the Poet. In both, though they begin with Chaucer's conventional May morning, the natural description becomes Scottish, and in both the national enthusiasm of the poet is strongly marked. But he soon ceased to imitate. The vigorous fun of the satires and the satirical ballads that he wrote is only matched by their coarseness, a coarseness and a fun that descended to Burns. Perhaps Dunbar's genius is still higher in a wild poem in which he personifies the seven deadly sins, and describes their dance, with a mixture of horror and humour which makes the little thing unique.

A man almost as remarkable as Dunbar is GAWIN DOUGLAS, Bishop of Dunkeld, who died in 1522, at the Court of Henry VIII., and was buried in the Savoy. He is the author of the first metrical English translation from the original of any Latin book. He translated Ovid's *Art of Love*, and afterwards, with truth and spirit, the *Æneid* of Vergil, 1513. To each book of the *Æneid* he wrote a prologue of his own. And it is chiefly by these that he takes rank among the Scottish poets. Three of them are descriptions of the country in May, in autumn, and in winter. The scenery is altogether Scotch, and the few Chaucerisms that appear seem absurdly out of place in a picture of nature which is as close as if it had been done by Keats in his early

time. The colour is superb, the landscape is described with an excessive detail, but it is not composed by any art into a whole. Still it astonishes the reader, and it is only by bringing in the Celtic element of love of nature that we can account for the vast distance between work like this and contemporary work in England such as Skelton's. Of Douglas's other original work, one poem, *The Palace of Honour*, 1501, continues the influence of Chaucer.

There were a number of other Scottish poets belonging to this time who are all remembered and praised by SIR DAVID LYNDSAY, whom it is best to mention in this place, because he still connects Scottish poetry with Chaucer. He was born about 1490 and is the last of the old Scottish school, and the most popular. He is the most popular because he is not only the Poet, but also the Reformer. His poem *The Dreme*, 1528, connects him with Chaucer. It is in the manner of the old poet. But its scenery is Scottish, and instead of the May morning of Chaucer, it opens on a winter's day of wind and sleet. The place is a cave over the sea, whence Lyndsay sees the weltering of the waves. Chaucer goes to sleep over Ovid or Cicero, Lyndsay falls into dream as he thinks of the "false world's instability," wavering like the sea waves. The difference marks not only the difference of the two countries, but the different natures of the men. Chaucer did not care much for the popular storms and loved the Court more than the Commonweal. Lyndsay in the *Dreme* and in two other poems—the *Complaint to the King*, and the *Testament of the King's Papyngo*"—is absorbed in the evils and sorrows of the people, in the desire to reform the abuses of the Church, of the Court, of party, of the nobility. In 1539 his *Satire of the Three Estates*, a Morality interspersed with interludes, was represented before James V. at Linlithgow. It was first acted in 1535, and was a daring attack on the ignorance, profligacy and exactions of the priesthood, on the vices and flattery of the favourites—"a mocking of abuses used in the country by diverse sorts of estate." A still bolder poem, and one thought so even by himself, is the *Monarchie*, 1553, his last work. Reformer as he was, he was more a social and political than a religious one. He bears the same relation to Knox as Langland did to Wiclif. When he was sixty-five years old he saw the fruits of his work. Ecclesiastical councils met to reform the Church. But the reform soon went beyond his temperate wishes. In 1557 the Reformation in Scotland was fairly launched when in December the Congregation signed the Bond of Association. Lyndsay had died three years before; he is as much the reformer as he is the poet, of a transition time. "Still his verse hath charms," but it was neither sweet nor imaginative. He had genuine satire, great moral breadth, much preaching power in verse, coarse, broad humour in plenty, and more dramatic power and invention than the rest of his fellows, and he lived an active, bold and brave life in a very stormy time.

56. **Italian Influence: Wyatt and Surrey.**—While poetry under Skelton and Lyndsay became an instrument of reform, it revived as an art at the close of Henry VIII.'s reign in SIR THOMAS WYATT and the EARL OF SURREY. They were both Italian travellers, and in bringing back to England the inspiration they had gained from Petrarca they re-made English poetry. They are our first really modern poets; the first who have anything of the modern manner. Though Italian in sentiment, their language is more English than Chaucer's, that is, they use fewer romance words. They handed down this purity of English to the Elizabethan poets, to Sackville, Spenser, and Shakespeare. They introduced a new kind of poetry, the amourist poetry. The "AMOURISTS," as they are called, were poets who composed a series of

poems on the subject of love—sonnets mingled with lyrical pieces after the manner of Petrarca, and in accord with the love philosophy he built on Plato. The *Hundred Passions* of Watson, the sonnets of Sidney, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Drummond, are all poems of this kind and the same impulse in a changed form appears in later literature, in the poems of Herrick and his school. The subjects of Wyatt and Surrey were chiefly lyrical, and the fact that they imitated the same model has made some likeness between them. Like their personal characters, however, the poetry of Wyatt is the more thoughtful and the more strongly felt, but Surrey's has a sweeter movement and a livelier fancy. Both did this great thing for English verse—they chose an exquisite model, and in imitating it "corrected the ruggedness of English poetry." Such verse as Skelton's became impossible. A new standard was made below which the after poets could not fall. They also added new stanza measures to English verse, and enlarged in this way the "lyrical range." Surrey was the first, in his *translation of Vergil's Æneid* to use the ten-syllabled, unrimed verse, which we now call **blank verse**. In his hands it is not worthy of praise; it had neither the true form nor harmony into which it grew afterwards. SACKVILLE, Lord Buckhurst, introduced it into drama; MARLOWE, in his *Tamburlaine*, made it the proper verse of the drama, and Shakespeare, Beaumont, and Massinger used it splendidly. In plays it has a special manner of its own; in poetry proper it was, we may say, not only created but perfected by Milton.

The new impulse thus given to poetry was all but arrested by the bigotry that prevailed during the reigns of Edward VI. and Mary, and all the work of the New Learning seemed to be useless. But Thomas Wilson's book in English on *Rhetoric and Logic* in 1553, and the publication of Thos. Tusser's *Pointes of Husbandrie* and of Tottel's *Miscellany of Uncertain Authors*, 1557, in the last years of Mary's reign, proved that something was stirring beneath the gloom. The latter book contained the poems of Surrey and Wyatt, and others by Grimald, by Lord Vaux, and Lord Berners. The date should be remembered, for it is the first printed book of modern English poetry. It proves that men cared now more for the new than the old poets, that the time of imitation of Chaucer was over, and that of original creation begun. It ushers in the Elizabethan literature.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM 1559 to 1603.

Sackville's *Mirror of Magistrates*, **1559**.—Lyly's *Euphues*.—Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender*, **1579**.—Sidney's *Arcadia*, **1580**.—Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, **1594**.—Bacon's *Essays*, **1597**.—Spenser born, **1552**; *Faerie Queen*, **1590-1595**; died, **1598**.—W. Warner's, S. Daniel's, M. Drayton's *historical poems*, **1595-1598**.—Sir J. Davies's and Lord Brooke's *philosophical poems*, **1599-1620**.

The Drama.—First Miracle Play, **1120**.—Interludes of T. Heywood, **1533**.—First English Comedy, **1540**.—First English Tragedy, **1562**.—First English Theatre, **1576**.—Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, **1587**.—Shakespeare born, **1564**; *Love's Labour's Lost*, **1588**; *Merchant of Venice*, **1596**; *Hamlet*, **1602**; *Cymbeline*, **1610**; *Henry VIII.*, **1613**; died, **1616**.—Ben Jonson begins work, **1596**; dies, **1637**.—Beaumont and Fletcher.

Webster's first play, **1612**.—Massinger begins, **1620**; dies, **1640**.—John Ford's first play, **1628**.—James Shirley, last Elizabethan Dramatist, lives to **1666**; Theatre closed, **1642**; opens again, **1656**.

57. **Elizabethan Literature**, as a literature, may be said to begin with Surrey and Wyatt. But as their poems were published the year before Elizabeth came to the throne, we date the beginning of the

poems on the subject of love—sonnets mingled with lyrical pieces after the manner of Petrarca, and in accord with the love philosophy he built on Plato. The *Hundred Passions* of Watson, the sonnets of Sidney, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Drummond, are all poems of this kind and the same impulse in a changed form appears in later literature, in the poems of Herrick and his school. The subjects of Wyatt and Surrey were chiefly lyrical, and the fact that they imitated the same model has made some likeness between them. Like their personal characters, however, the poetry of Wyatt is the more thoughtful and the more strongly felt, but Surrey's has a sweeter movement and a livelier fancy. Both did this great thing for English verse—they chose an exquisite model, and in imitating it "corrected the ruggedness of English poetry." Such verse as Skelton's became impossible. A new standard was made below which the after poets could not fall. They also added new stanza measures to English verse, and enlarged in this way the "lyrical range." Surrey was the first, in his *translation of Vergil's Æneid* to use the ten-syllabled, unrimed verse, which we now call **blank verse**. In his hands it is not worthy of praise; it had neither the true form nor harmony into which it grew afterwards. SACKVILLE, Lord Buckhurst, introduced it into drama; MARLOWE, in his *Tamburlaine*, made it the proper verse of the drama, and Shakespeare, Beaumont, and Massinger used it splendidly. In plays it has a special manner of its own; in poetry proper it was, we may say, not only created but perfected by Milton.

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57. **Elizabethan Literature**, as a literature, may be said to begin with Surrey and Wyatt. But as their poems were published the year before Elizabeth came to the throne, we date the beginning of the

early period of Elizabethan literature from the year of her accession, 1559. That period lasted till 1579, and was followed by the great literary outburst, as it has been called, of the days of Spenser and Shakespeare. The apparent suddenness of this outburst has been an object of wonder. Men have searched for its causes, chiefly in the causes which led to the revival of learning, and no doubt these bore on England as they did on the whole of Europe. But we shall best seek its nearest causes in the work done during the early years of Elizabeth, and in doing so we shall find that the outburst was not so sudden after all. It was preceded by a very various, plentiful, but inferior literature, in which new forms of poetry and prose-writing were tried and new veins of thought opened, which were afterwards wrought out fully and splendidly. All the germs of the coming age are to be found in these twenty years. The outburst of a plant into flower seems sudden, but the whole growth of the plant has caused it, and the flowering of Elizabethan literature was the slow result of the growth of the previous literature and the influences that bore upon it.

58. **First Elizabethan Period, 1559–1579.**—(1.) The only literary prose of this time is that of the *Scholemaster* of ASCHAM, published 1570. This book, which is on education, is the work of the scholar of the New Learning of the time of Henry VIII. who has lived on into another time. It is not, properly speaking, Elizabethan, it is like a stranger in a new land and among new manners.

(2.) *Poetry* is first represented by SACKVILLE Lord Buckhurst. The *Mirror of Magistrates*, 1559, for which he wrote the *Induction* and one tale, is a poem on the model of Boccaccio's *Falls of Princes*, already imitated by Lydgate. Seven poets, along with Sackville, contributed tales to it, but his poem is the only one of any value. The *Induction* paints the

poet's descent into Avernus, and his meeting with Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, whose fate he tells with a grave and inventive imagination. Being written in the manner and stanza of the elder poets, this poem has been called the transition between Lydgate and Spenser. But it does not truly belong to the old time; it is as modern as Spenser. GEORGE GASCOIGNE, whose satire, the *Steele Glas*, 1576, is our first long satirical poem, is the best among a crowd of lesser poets who came after Sackville. They wrote legends, pieces on the wars and discoveries of the Englishmen of their day, epitaphs, epigrams, songs, sonnets, elegies, fables, and sets of love poems; and the best things they did were collected in a miscellany called the *Paradise of Dainty Devices*, in 1576. This book, with Tottel's, set on foot in the later years of Elizabeth a crowd of other miscellanies of poetry which were of great use to the poets. Lyrical poetry, and that which we may call "occasional poetry," was now fairly started.

(3.) *Frequent translations* were now made from the classical writers. We know the names of more than twelve men who did this work, and there must have been many more. Already in Henry VIII.'s and Edward VI.'s time, ancient authors had been made English; and before 1579, Vergil, Ovid, Cicero, Demosthenes, and many Greek and Latin plays were translated. In this way the best models were brought before the English people, and it is in the influence of the spirit of Greek and Roman literature on literary form and execution that we are to find one of the vital causes of the greatness of the later Elizabethan literature.

(4.) *Theological reform* stirred men to another kind of literary work. A great number of satirical ballads, and pamphlets, and plays issued every year from obscure presses and filled the land. Poets like George Gascoigne, and still more Barnaby Googe,

represent in their work the hatred the young men had of the old religious system. It was a spirit which did not do much for literature, but it quickened the habit of composition, and it made it easier. The Bible also became common property, and its language glided into all theological writing and gave it a literary tone; while the publication of John Fox's *Acts and Monuments* or *Book of Martyrs*, 1563, gave to the people all over England a book which, by its simple style, the ease of its story-telling, and its popular charm made the very peasants who heard it read feel what is meant by literature.

(5.) The *love of stories* again awoke. The old English tales and ballads were eagerly read and collected. Italian Tales by various authors were translated and sown so broadcast over London by William Painter in his collection *The Palace of Pleasure* 1566, by George Turbervile and others, that it is said they were to be bought at every bookstall. A great number of subjects for prose and poetry were thus made ready for literary men, and fiction became possible in English literature.

(6.) The *history* of the country and its manners was not neglected. A whole class of antiquarians wrote steadily, if with some dulness, on this subject. Grafton, Stow, Holinshed and others, at least supplied materials for the study and use of the historical drama.

(7.) The *masques*, *pageants*, *interludes*, and *plays* that were written at this time, are scarcely to be counted. At every great ceremonial, whenever the queen made a progress, or visited one of the great lords or a university; at the houses of the nobility, and at the court on all important days, some obscure versifier, or a young scholar at the Inns of Court, at Oxford or at Cambridge, produced a masque or a pageant, or wrote or translated a play. The habit of play-writing became common; a kind of school, one might almost say a manufacture of plays arose, which partly accounts for the rapid production, the excellence, and the multitude of plays that we find after 1579. Represented all over England, these masques, pageants, and dramas were seen by the people who were thus accustomed to take an interest though of an uneducated kind in the larger drama that was to follow. The literary men on the other hand ransacked, in order to find subjects and scenes for their pageants, ancient and mediæval and modern literature, and many of them in doing so became fine scholars. The imagination of England was quickened and educated in this way, and as Biblical stories were also largely used, the images of oriental life were added to the materials of imagination.

(8.) Another influence bore on literature. It was that given by the *stories of the voyagers*, who in the new commercial activity of the country, penetrated into strange lands. Before 1579, books had been published on the north-west passage. Frobisher had made his voyages and Drake had started, to return in 1580 to amaze all England with the story of his sail round the world and of the riches of the Spanish Main. We may trace everywhere in Elizabethan literature the impression made by the wonders told by the sailors and captains who explored and fought from the North Pole to the Southern Seas.

(9.) Lastly, we have proof that there was a large number of *persons writing who did not publish their works*. It was considered at this time, that to write for the public injured a man, and unless he were driven by poverty he kept his manuscript by him. But things were changed when a great genius like Spenser took the world by storm; when Lyly's *Euphues* enchanted the whole of court society; when a great gentleman like Sir Philip Sidney became a writer. Literature was made the fashion, and the disgrace being taken from it, the production became enormous.

Manuscripts written and laid by were at once sent forth; and when the rush began it grew by its own force. Those who had previously been kept from writing by its unpopularity now took it up eagerly, and those who had written before wrote twice as much now. The great improvement also in literary quality is easily accounted for by this—that men strove to equal such work as Sidney's or Spenser's, and that a wider and sharper criticism arose.

59. **The Later Literature of Elizabeth's Reign, 1579-1602,** begins with the publication of Lyly's *Euphues* and Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender*, both in 1579, and with the writing of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* and his *Defence of Poetrie*, 1580-81. It will be best to leave the poem of Spenser aside till we come to write of the poets. The *Euphues* and the *Arcadia* carried on the story-telling literature; the *Defence of Poetrie* created a new form of literature, that of criticism.

The *Euphues* was the work of JOHN LYLY, poet and dramatist. It is in two parts, *Euphues* and *Euphues' England*. In six years it ran through five editions, so great was its popularity. Its prose style is too poetic, but it is admirable for its smoothness and charm, and its very faults were of use in softening the rudeness of previous prose. The story is long and is more a loose framework into which Lyly could fit his thoughts on love, friendship, education and religion than a true story. The second part is made up of several stories in one, and is a picture of the Englishman abroad. It made its mark because it fell in with all the fantastic and changeable life of the time. Its far-fetched conceits, its extravagance of gallantry, its endless metaphors from the classics and natural history, its curious and gorgeous descriptions of dress and its pale imitation of chivalry were all reflected in the life and talk and dress of the court of Elizabeth. It became the fashion to talk "Euphuism," and, like the *Utopia* of More, it has created an English word.

The *Arcadia* was the work of SIR PHILIP SIDNEY, and though written in 1580, did not appear till after his death. It is more poetic in style than the *Euphues*, and Sidney himself, as he wrote it under the trees of Wilton, would have called it a poem. It is less the image of the time than of the man. Most people know that bright and noble figure, the friend of Spenser, the lover of Stella, the last of the old knights, the poet, the critic, and the Christian, who, wounded to the death, gave up the cup of water to a dying soldier. We find his whole spirit in the story of the *Arcadia*, in the first two books and part of the third, which alone were written by him. It is a romance mixed up with pastoral stories, after the fashion of the Spanish romances. The characters are real, but the story is confused by endless digressions. The sentiment is too fine and delicate for the world. The descriptions are picturesque and the sentences made as perfect as possible. A quaint or poetic thought or an epigram appear in every line. There is no real art in it, or in its prose. But it is so full of poetry that it became a mine into which poets dug for subjects.

60. **Criticism** began with Sidney's *Art of Poetrie*. Its style shows us that he felt how faulty the prose of the *Arcadia* was. The book made a new step in the creation of a dignified English prose. It is still too flowery, but in it the fantastic prose of his own *Arcadia* and of the *Euphues* dies. As criticism it is chiefly concerned with poetry. It defends, against STEPHEN GOSSON'S *School of Abuse*, in which poetry and plays were attacked from the Puritan point of view, the nobler uses of poetry. Sackville, Surrey and Spenser are praised, and the other poets made little of in its pages. It was followed by WEBBE'S *Discourse of English Poetrie* written "to stirre up some other of meet abilitie to bestow travell on the matter." Already the other was travailing, and the *Arte of English Poesie*, supposed to be written by GEORGE PUTTENHAM, was

published in 1589. It is the most elaborate book on the whole subject in Elizabeth's reign, and it marks the strong interest now taken in poetry in the highest society that the author says he writes it "to help the courtiers and the gentlewomen of the court to write good poetry, that the art may become vulgar for all Englishmen's use."

61. **Later Theological Literature.**—Before we come to the Poetry we will give an account of the Prose into which the tendencies of the earlier years of Elizabeth grew. The first is that of *theology*. For a long time it remained only a literature of pamphlets. Puritanism in its attack on the stage, and in the Martin Marprelate controversy upon episcopal government in the Church, flooded England with small books. Lord Bacon even joined in the latter controversy, and Nash the dramatist made himself famous in the war by the vigour and fierceness of his wit. Over this troubled sea rose at last the stately work of RICHARD HOOKER. It was in 1594 that the first four books of *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, a defence of the Church against the Puritans, were given to the world. Before his death he finished the other four. The book has remained ever since a standard work. It is as much moral and political as theological. Its style is grave, clear, and often musical. He adorned it with the figures of poetry, but he used them with temperance, and the grand and rolling rhetoric with which he often concludes an argument is kept for its right place. On the whole it is the first monument of splendid literary prose that we possess.

62. **The Essay.**—We may place alongside of it, as the other great prose work of Elizabeth's later time, the development of the Essay in LORD BACON'S *Essays* 1597. Their highest literary merit is their combination of charm and even of poetic prose with conciseness of expression and fulness of thought. The rest of Bacon's work belongs to the following reign. The

splendour of the form, and of the English prose of the *Advancement of Learning*, afterwards written in the Latin language, and intended to be worked up by the addition of the *Novum Organum* and the *Sylva Sylvarum* into the treatise of the *Instauratio Magna*, which Bacon intended to be a philosophy of human knowledge, raises it into the realm of pure literature.

63. **History**, except in the publication of the earlier Chronicles by ARCHBISHOP PARKER, does not appear again in Elizabeth's reign; but in the next reign CAMDEN, SPELMAN, and JOHN SPEED continued the antiquarian researches of Stow and Grafton. Bacon published a history of Henry VII., and SAMUEL DANIEL, the poet, in his *History of England to the Time of Edward III.*, 1613—1618, was the first to throw history into such a literary form as to make it popular. KNOLLES' *History of the Turks* and SIR WALTER RALEIGH'S vast sketch of the *History of the World* show how for the first time history spread itself beyond English interests. Raleigh's book, written in the peaceful evening of a stormy life, and in the quiet of his prison, is not only literary from the ease and vigour of its style, but from its still spirit of melancholy thought.

64. **The Literature of Travel** was carried on by the publication in 1589 of HAKLUYT'S *Navigation, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, enlarged afterwards in 1625 by SAMUEL PURCHAS, who had himself written a book called *Purchas, his Pilgrimage; or, The Relations and Religions of the World.* The influence of a compilation of this kind, containing the great deeds of the English on the seas, has been felt ever since in the literature of fiction and poetry.

65. **Translations.**—There are three translators that take literary rank among the crowd that carried on the work of the earlier time. Two mark the influence of Italy, one the more powerful influence of

the Greek spirit. Sir John Harington in 1591 translated Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Fairfax in 1600 translated Tasso's *Jerusalem*, and his book is "one of the glories of Elizabeth's reign." But the noblest *translation* is that *of Homer's* whole work by George Chapman, the dramatist, the first part of which appeared in 1598. The vivid life and energy of the time, its creative power and its force, are expressed in this poem, which is more an Elizabethan tale written about Achilles and Ulysses than a translation. The rushing gallop of the long fourteen syllable stanza in which it is written has the fire and swiftness of Homer, but it has not his directness or dignity. Its "inconquerable quaintness" and diffuseness are as unlike the pure form and light and measure of Greek work as possible. But it is a distinct poem of such power that it will excite and delight all lovers of poetry, as it excited and delighted Keats. John Florio's *translation of the Essays of Montaigne*, 1603, is also worth mentioning because Shakespeare used the book, and because we trace Montaigne's influence on English literature even before his retranslation by Charles Cotton.

66. **In the Tales**, which poured out like a flood from the dramatists, from such men as Peele, and Lodge, and Greene, we find the origin of English fiction, and the subjects of many of our plays; while the fantastic attempt to revive the practices of chivalry which we have seen in the *Arcadia* found food in the translation of a new school of romances, such as *Amadis of Gaul*, *Palmerin of England*, and the *Seven Champions of Christendom*. We turn now to the Poetry.

67. **Edmund Spenser.**—The later Elizabethan poetry begins with the *Shepheardes Calender* of Spenser. Spenser was born in London, 1552, and educated at Cambridge, which he left at the age of twenty-four. Between these dates it is supposed that his early boyhood was passed in London, and his youth in

an English home among the glens of Lancashire. He returned thither after he left Cambridge and fell in love with a "fair widowe's daughter of the glen" whom he called Rosalind. His love was not returned and her coldness drove him southward. His college friend, Gabriel Harvey, made him known to Leicester, and probably, since Harvey was "Leicester's man," to Philip Sidney, Leicester's nephew; and it was at Sidney's house of Penshurst that the *Shepheardes Calender* was made, and the *Faerie Queen* begun. The publication of the former work in 1579 at once made Spenser the first poet of the day, and its literary freshness was such that men felt that for the first time since Chaucer, England had given birth to a great poet. It was a pastoral poem, divided into twelve eclogues, one for each month of the year. Shepherds and shepherd life were mixed in its verse with complaints for his lost love, with a desire for Church reform, with loyalty to the Queen. It marks the strong love of old English poetry by its reference to Chaucer, though it is in form imitated from the French pastoral of Clément Marot. The only tie it really has to Chaucer is in the choice of disused English words and spelling, a practice of Spenser's which somewhat spoils the *Faerie Queen*. The Puritanism of the poem does not lie in any attack on the Episcopal theory, but in an attack on the sloth and pomp of the clergy, and in a demand for a nobler moral life. It is the same in the *Faerie Queen*.

68. **The Faerie Queen.**—The twelve books of this poem were to represent the twelve moral virtues, each in the person of a knight who was to conquer all the separate sins and errors which were at battle with the virtue he personified. In Arthur, the king of the company, the Magnificence of the whole of virtue was to be represented, and he was at last to arrive at union with the Faerie Queen, that divine glory of God to which all human thought and act aspired. This was Spenser's Puritanism—the desire

after a perfectly pure life, for State and Church and Man. It was opposed in State and Church, he held, by the power of Rome which he paints as Duessa, the falsehood which wears the garb of truth, and who also serves to represent her in whom Catholicism most threatened England—Mary, Queen of Scots. Puritan in this sense, he is not Puritan in any other. He had nothing to do with the attack on Prelacy which was then raging, and the last canto of the Faerie Queen represents Calidore the knight of courtesy sent forth to bridle "the blatant beast," the many-tongued and noisy Presbyterian body which attacked the Church.

The poem however soars far above this region of debate into the calm and pure air of art. It is the poem of the human soul and all its powers struggling towards the perfect love, the love which is God. Filled full with christianized platonism, the ideas of truth, justice, temperance, courtesy do not remain ideas in Spenser's mind, as in Plato's, but become real personages whose lives and battles he honours and tells in verse so delicate, so gliding, and so steeped in the finer life of poetry, that he has been called the poet's poet. As the nobler Puritanism of the time is found in it, so also are the other influences of the time. It goes back, as men were doing then, to the old times for its framework, to the Celtic story of Arthur and his knights that Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Chaucer, and Thomas Malory had loved. It represents the new love of chivalry, the new love of classical learning, the new delight in mystic theories of love and religion. It is full of those allegorical schemes in which doctrines and heresies, virtues and vices were contrasted and personified. It takes up and uses the popular legends of fairies, dwarfs, and giants, and mingles them with the savages and the wonders of the New World of which the voyagers told in every company. Nearly the whole spirit of the English Renaissance under Elizabeth, except its coarser and

baser elements, is in its pages. Of anything impure or ugly, or violent, there is not a trace. Spenser walks through the whole of this woven world of faerie

"With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace."

The first three books were finished in Ireland, whither he had gone as secretary to Lord Grey of Wilton in 1580. Raleigh listened to them in 1589 at Kilcolman Castle, among the alder shades of the river Mulla that fed the lake below the castle. Delighted with the poem, he brought Spenser to England. The books were published in 1590, and the Queen, the Court, and the whole of England soon shared in Raleigh's delight. It was the first great ideal poem that England had produced, and it is the source of all our modern poetry. It has never ceased to make poets and it will not lose its power while our language lasts.

69. **Spenser's Minor Poems.**—The next year, 1591, Spenser being still in England, collected his smaller poems and published them. Among them *Mother Hubbard's Tale* is a bright imitation of Chaucer, and the *Tears of the Muses* supports my statement that literature was looked on coldly previous to 1580 by the complaint the Muses make in it of their subjects being despised in England. Sidney had died in 1586, and three of these poems bemoan his death. The others are of slight importance, and the whole collection was entitled *Complaints*. Returning to Ireland he gave an account of his visit in *Colin Clout's come Home again*, 1591, and at last after more than a year's pursuit won his second love for his wife, and found with her perfect happiness. A long series of *Sonnets* records the progress of his wooing, and the *Epithalamium*, his marriage hymn, is the most glorious love-song in the English tongue. At the close of 1595 he brought to England in a second visit the last three books of the *Faerie Queen*. The next year he spent in London and published these books with

his other poems, the *Prothalamion* on the marriage of Lord Worcester's daughters, and his *Hymnes to Love and Beauty*, and to *Heavenly Love and Beauty*, in which the love philosophy of Petrarca is enshrined. The end of his life was sorrowful. In 1598 the Irish rising took place, his castle was burnt. and he and his family fled for their lives to England. Broken-hearted, poor, but not forgotten, the poet died in a London tavern. All his fellows went with his body to the grave where, close by Chaucer, he lies in Westminster Abbey. London, "his most kindly nurse," takes care also of his dust, and England keeps him in her love.

70. **Later Elizabethan Poetry, its Three Phases.**—Spenser reflected in his poems the spirit of the English Renaissance. The other poetry of Elizabeth's reign reflected the whole of English Life. The best way to arrange it—omitting as yet the Drama—is in an order parallel to the growth of the national life, and the proof that it is the best way is that on the whole such an order is a true chronological order. *First* then, if we compare England after 1580, as writers have often done, to an ardent youth, we shall find in the poetry of the first years that followed that date all the elements of youth. It is a poetry of love, and romance, and fancy. *Secondly*, and later on, when Englishmen grew older in feeling, their unsettled enthusiasm, which had flitted here and there in action and literature over all kinds of subjects, settled down into a steady enthusiasm for England itself. The country entered on its early manhood, and parallel with this there is the great outburst of historical plays, and a set of poets whom I will call the patriotic poets. *Thirdly*, and later still, all enthusiasm died down into a graver and more thoughtful national life, and parallel with this are the tragedies of Shakespeare and the poets whom I will call philosophical. These three classes of Poets overlapped one another, and grew up gradually, but on the whole their succession

represents a real succession of national thought and emotion.

A *fourth* and separate phase does not represent, as these do, a new national life, a new religion, and new politics, but the despairing struggle of the old faith against the new. There were numbers of men such as Wordsworth has finely sketched in old Norton in the *Doe of Rylstone*, who vainly strove in sorrow against all the new national elements. ROBERT SOUTHWELL, of Norfolk, a Jesuit priest, was the poet of Roman Catholic England. Imprisoned for three years, racked ten times, and finally executed, he wrote during his prison time his two longest poems, *St. Peter's Complaint*, and *Mary Magdalene's Funeral Tears*, and it marks not only the large Roman Catholic element in the country but also the strange contrasts of the time that eleven editions of poems with these titles were published between 1593 and 1600, at a time when the *Venus and Adonis* of Shakespeare led the way for a multitude of poems that sung of love and delight and England's glory. To these we now turn.

71. **The Love Poetry.**—I have called it by this name because in all its best work (to be found in the first book of Mr. Palgrave's "Golden Treasury") it is almost limited to that subject—the subject of youth. It is chiefly composed in the form of songs and sonnets and was published in miscellanies in and after 1600. The most famous of these, in which men like Nicholas Breton, Henry Constable, W. Barnfield and others wrote, are *England's Helicon*, and *Davison's Rhapsody* and the *Passionate Pilgrim*. The latter contained some poems of Shakespeare, and he is by virtue of these, and the songs in his Dramas, the best of these lyric writers. The songs themselves are "old and plain, and dallying with the innocence of love." They have natural sweetness, great simplicity of speech, and directness of statement. Some, as Shakespeare's, possess a "passionate reality;" others a quaint pastor-

alism like shepherd life in porcelain, such as Marlowe's well known song, "Come live with me, and be my love;" others a splendour of love and beauty as in Lodge's *Song of Rosaline* and Spenser's on his marriage. The sonnets were written chiefly in series, and I have already said that such writers are called amourists. Such were Shakespeare's and the *Amoretti* of Spenser, and those *to Diana* by Constable. They were often mixed with Canzones and Ballatas after the Italian manner, and the best of these were a series by Sir Philip Sidney. A number of other sonnets and of longer love poems were written by the dramatists before Shakespeare, by Peele and Greene and Marlowe and Lodge, far the finest being the *Hero and Leander*, which Marlowe left as a fragment to be completed by Chapman. Mingled up with these were small religious poems, the reflection of the Puritan and the more religious Church element in English society. They were collected under such titles as the *Handfull of Honeysuckles*, the *Poor Widow's Mite*, *Psalms and Sonnets*, and there are some good things among them written by William Hunnis.

In one Scotch poet, WILLIAM DRUMMOND of Hawthornden, the friend of Ben Jonson, the love poet and the religious poet were united. I mention him here, though his work properly belongs to the reign of James I., because his poetry really goes back in spirit and feeling to this time. He cannot be counted among the true Scottish poets. Drummond is entirely Elizabethan and English, and he is worthy to be named among the lyrical poets below Spenser and Shakespeare. His love sonnets have as much grace as Sidney's and less quaintness, his songs have often the grave simplicity of Wyat, and his religious poems, especially one solemn sonnet on John the Baptist, have a distant resemblance to the grandeur of Milton.

72. **The Patriotic Poets.**—Among all this poetry of Romance, Chivalry, Religion, and Love, rose a

poetry which devoted itself to the glory of England. It was chiefly historical, and as it may be said to have had its germ in the *Mirror of Magistrates*, so it had its perfect flower in the historical drama of Shakespeare. Men had now begun to have a great pride in England. She had stepped into the foremost rank, had outwitted France, subdued internal foes, beaten and humbled Spain on every sea. Hence the history of the land became precious, and the very rivers and hills and plains honourable, and to be sung and praised in verse. This poetic impulse is best represented in the works of three men—WILLIAM WARNER, SAMUEL DANIEL, and MICHAEL DRAYTON. Born within a few years of each other, about 1560, they all lived beyond the century, and the national poetry they set on foot lasted when the romantic poetry died.

William Warner's great book was *Albion's England*, 1586, a history of England in verse from the Deluge to Queen Elizabeth. It is clever, humorous, crowded with stories, and runs to 10,000 lines. Its popularity was great, and the English in which it was written deserved it. Such stories as *Argentile and Curan*, and the *Patient Countess*, prove him to have had a true and pathetic vein of poetry. His English is not however better than that of "well-languaged Daniel," who among tragedies and pastoral comedies and poems of pure fancy wrote in verse a prosaic *History of the Civil Wars*, 1595, as we have already found him writing history in prose. Spenser saw in him a new "shepherd" of poetry who did far surpass the others, and Coleridge says that the style of his *Hymen's Triumph* may be declared "imperishable English." Of the three the greatest poet was Drayton. Two historical poems are his work—the *Civil Wars of Edward II. and the Barons*, and *England's Heroical Epistles*, 1598. Not content with these, he set himself to glorify the whole of his land in the *Polyolbion*, thirty books, and more than 30,000 lines. It is a

description in Alexandrines of the "tracts, mountains, forests, and other parts of this renowned isle of Britain, with intermixture of the most remarkable stories, antiquities, wonders, pleasures, and commodities of the same, digested into a poem." It was not a success, though it deserved success. Its great length was against it, but the real reason was that this kind of poetry had had its day. It appeared in 1613, in James I.'s reign.

73. **Philosophical Poets.**—Before that time a change had come. As the patriotic poets came after the romantic, so the romantic were followed by the philosophical poets. The youth and early manhood of the Elizabethan poetry passed, about 1600, into its thoughtful manhood. The land was settled; enterprise ceased to be the first thing; men sat down to think, and in poetry questions of religious and political philosophy were treated with "sententious reasoning, grave, subtle, and condensed." Shakespeare, in his passage from comedy to tragedy, in 1602, represents this change. The two poets who represent it are SIR JNO. DAVIES and FULKE GREVILLE, Lord Brooke. In Davies himself we find an instance of it. His earlier poem of the *Orchestra*, 1596, in which the whole world is explained as a dance, is as gay and bright as Spenser. His later poem, 1599, is compact and vigorous reasoning, for the most part without fancy. Its very title, *Nosce te ipsum*—Know Thyself—and its divisions, 1. "On humane learning," 2. "The immortality of the soul"—mark the alteration. Two little poems, one of Bacon's, on the *Life of Man*, as a bubble, and one of SIR HENRY WOTTON'S, on the *Character of a Happy Life*, are instances of the same change. It is still more marked in Lord Brooke's long, obscure poems *On Human Learning, on Wars, on Monarchy, and on Religion.* They are political and historical treatises, not poems, and all in them, says Lamb, "is made frozen and

rigid by intellect." Apart from poetry, "they are worth notice as an indication of that thinking spirit on political science which was to produce the riper speculations of Hobbes, Harrington, and Locke." We turn now to the Drama, which includes all these different forms of poetry.

THE DRAMA.

74. **Early Dramatic Representation in England.**—The drama, as in Greece, so in England, began in religion. In early times none but the clergy could read the stories of their religion, and it was not the custom to deliver sermons to the people. It was necessary to instruct uneducated men in the history of the Bible, the Christian faith, the lives of the Saints and Martyrs. Hence the Church set on foot miracle plays and mysteries. We find the first of these about 1110, when Geoffrey, afterwards Abbot of St. Albans, prepared his miracle play of St. Catherine for acting. Such plays became more frequent from the time of Henry II., and they were so common in Chaucer's time that they were the resort of idle gossips in Lent. The wife of Bath went to "plays of miracles and marriages." They were acted not only by the clergy, but by the laity. About the year 1268 the town guilds began to take them into their own hands, and acted complete sets of plays, setting forth the whole of Scripture history from the Creation to the Day of Judgment. Each guild took one play in the set. They lasted sometimes three days, sometimes eight, and were represented on a great movable stage on wheels in the open spaces of the towns. Of these sets we have three remaining, the Towneley, Coventry and Chester plays: 1300—1600. The first set has 32, the second 42, and the third 25 plays.

75. **The Miracle Play** was a representation of some portion of Scripture history, or of the life of some

Saint of the Church. The **Mystery** was a representation of any portion of the New Testament history concerned with a mysterious subject, such as the Incarnation, the Atonement or the Resurrection. It has been attempted to distinguish these more particularly, but they are mingled together in England into one. From the towns they went to the Court and the houses of nobles. The Kings kept players of them, and we know that exhibiting Scripture plays at great festivals was part of the domestic regulations of the great houses, and that it was the Chaplain's business to write them. Their "Dumb Show" and their "Chorus" leave their trace in the regular drama. We cannot say that the modern drama arose after them, for it came in before they died out in England. They were still acted in Chester in 1577, and in Coventry in 1580.

76. **The Morality** was the next step to these, and in it we come to a representation which is closely connected with the drama. It was a play in which the characters were the Vices and Virtues, with the addition afterwards of allegorical personages, such as Riches, Good Deeds, Confession, Death, and any human condition or quality needed for the play. These characters were brought together in a rough story, at the end of which Virtue triumphed, or some moral principle was established. The dramatic *fool* grew up in the Moralities out of a personage called "The Vice," and the humorous element was introduced by the retaining of "The Devil" from the Miracle play and by making *the Vice* torment him. They were continually represented, but becoming coarser were finally supplanted by the regular drama about the end of Elizabeth's reign.

77. **The Transition between these and the regular Drama** is not hard to trace. The Virtues and Vices were dull because they stirred no human sympathy. Historical characters were therefore then

introduced, who were celebrated for a virtue or a vice; Brutus represented patriotism, Aristides represented justice; or, as in Bale's *Kynge Johan*, historical and allegorical personages were mixed together. The transition was hastened by the impulse of the Reformation. The religious struggle came so home to men's hearts that they were not satisfied with subjects drawn from the past, and the Morality was used to support the Catholic or the Protestant side. Real men and women were shown under the thin cloaks of its allegorical characters; the vices and the follies of the time were displayed. It was the origin of satiric comedy. The stage was becoming a living power when this began. The excitement of the audience was now very different from that felt in listening to Virtues and Vices, and a demand arose for a comedy and tragedy which should picture human life in all its forms. The *Interludes* of JOHN HEYWOOD, most of which were written for Court representation in Henry VIII.'s time 1530, 1540, represent this further transition. They differed from the Morality in that most of the characters were drawn from real life, but they retained "the Vice" as a personage. The Interlude—a short, humorous piece, to be acted in the midst of the Morality for the amusement of the people—had been frequently used, but Heywood isolated it from the Morality and made of it a kind of farce. Out of it we may say grew English comedy.

78. **The First Stage of the regular Drama** begins with the first English comedy, *Ralph Roister Doister*, written by NICHOLAS UDALL, master of Eton, known to have been acted before 1551, but not published till 1566. It is our earliest picture of London manners; the characters are well drawn; it is divided into regular acts and scenes and is made in rime. The first English tragedy is *Gorboduc*, written by Sackville and Norton and represented in 1562. The story was taken from British legend, and

the characters are gravely sustained. But the piece was heavy and too solemn for the audience, and Richard Edwards by mixing tragic and comic elements together in his play, *Damon and Pythias*, acted about 1564, succeeded better. These two gave the impulse to a number of dramas from classical and modern story, which were acted at the Universities, Inns of Court, and the Court up to 1580, when the drama, having gone through its boyhood, entered on a vigorous manhood. More than fifty-two dramas, so quick was their production, are known to have been acted up to this time. Some were translated from the Greek, as the *Jocasta* from Euripides, and others from the Italian, as the *Supposes* from Ariosto, both by the same author, George Gascoigne, already mentioned as a satirist. These were acted in 1566.

79. **The Theatre.**—There was as yet no theatre. A patent was given in 1574 to the Earl of Leicester's servants to act plays in any town in England, and they built in 1576 the Blackfriars Theatre. In the same year two others were set up in the fields about Shoreditch—"The Theatre" and "The Curtain." The Globe Theatre, built for Shakespeare and his fellows in 1594, may stand as a type of the rest. In the form of a hexagon outside, it was circular within and open to the weather, except above the stage. The play began at three o'clock; the nobles and ladies sat in boxes or in stools on the stage, the people stood in the pit or yard. The stage itself, strewn with rushes, was a naked room with a blanket for a curtain. Wooden imitations of animals, towers, woods, etc., were all the scenery used, and a board, stating the place of action, was hung out from the top when the scene changed. Boys acted the female parts. It was only after the restoration that movable scenery and actresses were introduced. No "pencil's aid" supplied the landscape of Shakespeare's plays. The forest of Arden, the castle of Duncan, were "seen only by the intellectual eye."

80. **The Second Stage of the Drama** ranges from 1580 to 1596. It includes the work of Lyly (author of the *Euphues*), the plays of Peele, Greene, Lodge, Marlowe, Kyd, Munday, Chettle, Nash, and the earliest works of Shakespeare. During this time we know that more than 100 different plays were performed by four out of the eleven companies; so swift and plentiful was their production. They were written in prose, and in rime, and in blank verse mixed with prose and rime. Prose and rime, prevailed before 1587, when Marlowe in his play of *Tamburlaine* made blank verse the fashion. JOHN LYLY illustrates the three methods, for he wrote seven plays in prose, one in rime, and one (after *Tamburlaine*) in blank verse. Some beautiful little songs scattered through them are the forerunners of the songs with which Shakespeare made his dramas bright, and the witty "quips and cranks," repartees, and similes of their fantastic prose dialogue were the school of Shakespeare's prose dialogue. PEELE, GREENE, and MARLOWE are the three important names of the period. They are the first in whose hands the play of human passion and action is expressed with any true dramatic effect. Peele and Greene make their characters act on, and draw out, one another in the several scenes, but they have no power of making a plot, or of working out their plays, scene by scene, to a natural conclusion. They are, in one word, without art, and their characters, even when they talk in good poetry, are neither natural nor simple.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE, on the other hand, rose by degrees and easily into mastery of his art. The difference between the unequal and violent action and thought of his *Doctor Faustus*, and the quiet and orderly progression to its end of the play of *Edward II.*, is all the more remarkable when we know that he died at thirty. Though less than Shakespeare, he was worthy to precede him. As he

may be said to have invented and made the verse of the drama, so he created the English tragic drama. His plays are wrought with art to their end, his characters are sharply and strongly outlined. Each play illustrates one ruling passion, in its growth, its power, and its extremes. *Tamburlaine* paints the desire of universal empire; the *Jew of Malta*, the passions of greed and hatred; *Doctor Faustus*, the struggle and failure of man to possess all knowledge and all pleasure without toil and without law; *Edward II.*, the misery of weakness and the agony of a king's ruin. Marlowe's verse is "mighty," his poetry strong and weak alike with passionate feeling, and expressed with a turbulent magnificence of words and images, the fault of which is a very great want of temperance. It reflects his life and the lives of those with whom he lived. Marlowe lived and died an irreligious, imaginative, tender-hearted, licentious poet. Peele and Greene lived an even more riotous life and died as miserably, and they are examples of a crowd of other dramatists who passed their lives between the theatre, the wine-shop, and the prison. Their drama, in which we see the better side of the men, had all the marks of a wild youth. It was daring, full of strong but unequal life, romantic, sometimes savage, often tender, always exaggerated in its treatment and expression of the human passions. If it had no moderation, it had no tame dulness. If it was coarse, it was powerful, and it was above all national. It was a time full of strange contrasts, a time of fiery action and of sentimental contemplation; a time of fancy and chivalry, indelicacy and buffoonery; of great national adventure and private brawls, of literary quiet and polemic thought; of faith and infidelity—and the whole of it is painted with truth, but with too glaring colours, in the drama of these men.

81. **William Shakespeare**, the greatest dramatist of the world, now took up the work of Marlowe, and in

twenty-eight years made the drama represent the whole of human life. He was born April 26, 1564, the son of a comfortable burgess of Stratford-on-Avon. While he was still young his father fell into poverty, and an interrupted education left him an inferior scholar. "He had small Latin and less Greek." But by dint of genius and by living in a society in which all sorts of information were attainable, he became an accomplished man. The story told of his deer-stealing in Charlecote Park is without proof, but it is probable that his youth was wild and passionate. At nineteen, he married Ann Hathaway, seven years older than himself, and was probably unhappy with her. For this reason, or from poverty, or from the driving of the genius that led him to the stage, he left Stratford about 1586–7, and came to London at the age of twenty-two years, and falling in with Marlowe, Greene and the rest, became an actor and play-wright, and may have lived their unrestrained and riotous life for some years.

82. **His First Period.**—It is probable that before leaving Stratford he had composed a part at least of his *Venus and Adonis*. It is full of the country sights and sounds, of the ways of birds and animals, such as he saw when wandering in Charlecote Park. Its rich and overladen poetry and its warm colouring made him, when it was published in 1593, at once the favourite of men like Lord Southampton and lifted him into fame. But before that date he had done work for the stage by touching up old plays, and writing new ones. We seem to trace his "prentice hand" in many dramas of the time, but the first he is usually thought to have retouched is *Titus Andronicus*, and some time after the *First Part of Henry VI.* *Love's Labour's Lost* the first of his original plays, in which he quizzed and excelled the Euphuists in wit, was followed by the rapid farce of the *Comedy of Errors*. Out of these frolics of intellect and action he passed into pure poetry in the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*,

and mingled into fantastic beauty the classic legend, the mediæval fairyland, and the clownish life of the English mechanic. Italian story then laid its charm upon him, and the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* preceded the southern glow of passion in *Romeo and Juliet*, in which he first reached tragic power. They complete, with *Love's Labour's Won*, afterwards recast as *All's Well that Ends Well*, the love plays of his early period. We may perhaps add to them the second act of an older play, *Edward III.* We should certainly read along with them, as belonging to the same passionate time, his *Rape of Lucrece*, a poem finally printed in 1594, one year later than the *Venus and Adonis*.

The same poetic succession we have traced in the poets is now found in Shakespeare. The patriotic feeling of England, also represented in Marlowe and Peele, now seized on him, and he turned from love to begin his great series of historical plays with *Richard II.*, 1593—4. *Richard III.* followed quickly. To introduce it and to complete the subject, he recast the *Second and Third Parts of Henry VI.* (written by some unknown authors) and ended his first period by *King John;* five plays in a little more than two years.

83. **His Second Period, 1596—1602.**—In the *Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare reached entire mastery over his art. A mingled woof of tragic and comic threads is brought to its highest point of colour when Portia and Shylock meet in court. Pure comedy followed in his retouch of the old *Taming of the Shrew*, and all the wit of the world mixed with noble history met next in the three comedies of *Falstaff*, the first and second *Henry IV.* and the *Merry Wives of Windsor*. The historical plays were then closed with *Henry V.;* a splendid dramatic song to the glory of England. The Globe theatre, in which he was one of the proprietors, was now started, and in the comedies he wrote for it Shakespeare turned to write of love

again, not to touch its deeper passion as before but to play with it in all its lighter phases. The flashing dialogue of *Much Ado About Nothing* was followed by the far-off forest world of *As You Like It*, where "the time fleets carelessly," and Rosalind's character is the play. Amid all its gracious lightness steals in a new element, and the melancholy of Jaques is the first touch we have of the older Shakspere who had "gained his experience, and whose experience had made him sad." As yet it was but a touch; *Twelfth Night* shows no trace of it, though the play that followed, *All's Well That Ends Well*, again strikes a sadder note. We find this sadness fully grown in the later sonnets, which are said to have been finished about 1602. They were published in 1609.

Shakespeare's life changed now, and his mind changed with it. He had grown wealthy during this period, famous, and loved by society. He was the friend of the Earls of Southampton and Essex, and William Herbert, Lord Pembroke. The Queen patronized him; all the best literary society was his own. He had rescued his father from poverty, bought the best house in Stratford and much land, and was a man of wealth and comfort. Suddenly all his life seems to have grown dark. His best friends fell into ruin, Essex perished on the scaffold, Southampton went to the Tower, Pembroke was banished from the Court; he may himself, as some have thought, have been concerned in the rising of Essex. Added to this, we may conjecture, from the imaginative pageantry of the sonnets, that he had unwisely loved, and been betrayed in his love by a dear friend. Disgust of his profession as an actor and public and private ill weighed heavily on him, and in darkness of spirit, he retired from the business of the theatre, and passed from comedy to write of the sterner side of the world, to tell the tragedy of mankind.

84. **His Third Period, 1602—1608,** begins with

the last days of Queen Elizabeth. It contains all the great tragedies, and opens with the fate of Hamlet, who felt, like the poet himself, that "the time was out of joint." *Hamlet*, the dreamer, may well represent Shakespeare as he stood aside from the crash that overwhelmed his friends, and thought on the changing world. The tragi-comedy of *Measure for Measure* was next written and is tragic in thought throughout. *Julius Cæsar*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, *Troilus and Cressida* (finished from an incomplete work of his youth), *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon*, (only in part his own), were all written in these five years. The darker sins of men, the unpitying fate which slowly gathers round and falls on men, the avenging wrath of conscience, the cruelty and punishment of weakness, the treachery, lust, jealousy, ingratitude, madness of men, the follies of the great and the fickleness of the mob, are all, with a thousand other varying moods and passions, painted, and felt as his own while he painted them, during this stern time.

85. **His Fourth Period, 1608—1613.**—As Shakespeare wrote of these things he passed out of them, and his last days are full of the gentle and loving calm of one who has known sin and sorrow and fate but has risen above them into peaceful victory. Like his great contemporary Bacon, he left the world and his own evil time behind him, and with the same quiet dignity sought the innocence and stillness of country life. The country breathes through all the dramas of this time. The flowers Perdita gathers in *Winter's Tale*, the frolic of the sheep-shearing, he may have seen in the Stratford meadows; the song of Fidele in *Cymbeline* is written by one who already feared no more the frown of the great, nor slander, nor censure rash, and was looking forward to the time when men should say of him—

> "Quiet consummation have;
> And renownèd be thy grave!"

Shakespeare left London in 1609, and from that time lived in the house he had bought at Stratford-on-Avon. He was reconciled, it is said, to his wife, and the plays he writes speak of domestic peace and forgiveness. The story of *Marina*, which he left unfinished, and which two later writers expanded into the play of *Pericles*, is the first of his closing series of dramas. The *Two Noble Kinsmen* of Fletcher, a great part of which is now, on doubtful grounds I think, attributed to Shakespeare, and in which the poet sought the inspiration of Chaucer, would belong to this period. *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale*, and the *Tempest*, bring his history up to 1612, and in the next year he closed his poetic life by writing, with Fletcher, *Henry VIII.* All these belong to and praise forgiveness, and it seems, if we may conjecture, that looking back on all the wrong he had suffered and on all that he had done, Shakespeare could say in the forgiveness he gave to men, and in the forgiveness he sought from God, the words he had written in earlier days: "The quality of mercy is not strained." For three years he kept silence, and then, on the 23rd of April, 1616, on his fifty-second birthday, he died

86. **His work.**—We can only guess with regard to Shakespeare's life; we can only guess with regard to his character. It has been tried to find out what he was from his sonnets, and from his plays, but every attempt seems to be a failure. We cannot lay our hand on anything and say for certain that it was spoken by Shakespeare out of his own character. The most personal thing in all his writings is one that has been scarcely noticed. It is the Epilogue to the *Tempest*, and if it be, as is most probable, the last thing he ever wrote, then its cry for forgiveness, its tale of inward sorrow only to be relieved by prayer, give us some dim insight into how the silence of those three years was passed; while its declaration of his aim in writing "which was to please"—the true defini-

tion of an artist's aim—should make us very cautious in our efforts to define his character from his works. Shakespeare made men and women whose dramatic action on each other, and towards a catastrophe, was intended to please the public, not to reveal himself. He was altogether, from end to end, an artist, and the greatest artist the modern world has known. No commentary on his writings, no guesses about his life or character, are worth much which do not rest on this canon as their foundation—What he did, thought, learned, and felt, he did, thought, learned, and felt as an artist. And he was never less the artist, through all the changes of the time. Fully influenced, as we see in Hamlet he was, by the graver and more philosophic cast of thought of the later time of Elizabeth; passing on into the reign of James I., when pedantry took the place of gaiety, and sensual the place of imaginative love in the drama, and artificial art the place of that art which itself is nature; he preserves to the last the natural passion, the simple tenderness, the sweetness, grace, and fire of the youthful Elizabethan poetry. The *Winter's Tale* is as lovely a love story as *Romeo and Juliet*, the *Tempest* is more instinct with imagination and as great in fancy as the *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, and yet there are fully twenty years between them. The only change is in the increase of power and in a closer and graver grasp of human nature. In this unchangeableness of pure art-power Shakespeare stands entirely alone. Around him the whole tone and manner of the drama altered for the worse as his life went on, but his work grew to the close in strength and beauty.

87. **The Decay of the Drama** begins while Shakespeare is alive. At first one can scarcely call it decay, it was so magnificent. For it began with "rare BEN JONSON." His first play, in its very title, *Every Man in his Humour*, 1596–98, enables us to say in what the first step of this decay consisted. The drama

in Shakespeare's hands had been the painting of the whole of human nature, the painting of characters as they were built up by their natural bent, and by the play of circumstance upon them. The drama, in Ben Jonson's hands, was the painting of that particular human nature which he saw in his own age; and his characters are not men and women as they are, but as they may become when they are mastered by a special bias of the mind or **humour**. "The Manners, now called Humours, feed the Stage," says Jonson himself. *Every Man in his Humour* was followed by *Every Man out of his Humour*, and by *Cynthia's Revels*, written to satirize the courtiers. The fierce satire of these plays brought the town down upon him, and he replied to their "noise" in the *Poetaster*, in which Dekker and Marston were satirized. Dekker answered with the *Satiro-Mastix*, a bitter parody on the *Poetaster*, in which he did not spare Jonson's bodily defects. The staring Leviathan, as he calls Jonson, is not a very untrue description. Silent then for two years, he reappeared with the tragedy of *Sejanus*, and shortly after produced three splendid comedies in James I.'s reign, *Volpone the Fox*, *The Silent Woman*, and *The Alchemist*, 1605 9-10. The first is the finest thing he ever did, as great in power as it is in the interest and skill of its plot; the second is chiefly valuable as a picture of English life in high society; the third is full to weariness of Jonson's obscure learning, but its character of Sir Epicure Mammon redeems it. In 1611 his *Catiline* appeared, and eight years after he was made Poet Laureate. Soon he became poor and palsy stricken, but his genius did not decay. The most graceful and tender thing he ever wrote was written in his old age. His pastoral drama *The Sad Shepherd* proves that, like Shakespeare, Jonson grew kinder and gentler as he grew near to death, and death took him in 1637. He was a great man. The power of the young Elizabethan age belonged to him;

and he stands far below, but still worthily by, Shakespeare, "a robust, surly, and observing dramatist."

88. **Masques.**—Rugged as Jonson was, he could turn to light and graceful work, and it is with his name that we connect *the Masques*. Masques were dramatic representations made for a festive occasion, with a reference to the persons present and the occasion. Their personages were allegorical. They admitted of dialogue, music, singing, and dancing, combined by the use of some ingenious fable into a whole. They were made and performed for the court and the houses of the nobles, and the scenery was as gorgeous and varied as the scenery of the playhouse proper was poor and unchanging. Arriving for the first time at any repute in Henry VIII.'s time, they reached splendour under James and Charles I. Great men took part in them. When Ben Jonson wrote them, Inigo Jones made the scenery, and Lawes the music, and Lord Bacon, Whitelock, and Selden sat in committee for the last great masque presented to Charles. Milton himself made them worthier by writing *Comus*, and their scenic decoration was soon introduced into the regular theatres.

89. **Beaumont and Fletcher** worked together, but out of more than fifty plays, all written in James I.'s reign, not more than fourteen were shared in by Beaumont, who died at the age of thirty in 1616. Fletcher survived him, and died in 1625. Both were of gentle birth. Beaumont, where we can trace his work, is weightier and more dignified than his comrade, but Fletcher was the better poet. Fletcher wrote rapidly, but his imagination worked slowly. Their *Philaster* and *Thierry and Theodoret* are fine examples of their tragic power. Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* is full of lovely poetry, and both are masters of grace, and pathos and style. They enfeebled the blank verse of the drama, while they rendered it sweeter by using feminine endings and adding an eleventh syllable with great frequency. This gave freedom and

elasticity to their verse and was suited to the dialogue of comedy, but it lowered the dignity of their tragedy. The two men mark a change in politics and society from Shakespeare's time. Shakespeare's loyalty is constitutional; Beaumont and Fletcher are blind supporters of James I.'s invention of the divine right of kings. Shakespeare's society was on the whole decent, and it is so in his plays. Beaumont and Fletcher are "studiously indecent." In contrast to them Shakespeare is as white as snow. Shakespeare's men are of the type of Sidney and Raleigh, Burleigh and Drake. The men of these two writers represent the "young bloods;" of the Stuart Court; and even the best of their older and graver men are base and foul in thought. Their women are either monsters of badness or of goodness. When they paint a good woman (two or three at most being excepted), she is beyond nature. The fact is that the high art which in Shakespeare sought to give a noble pleasure by being true to human nature in its natural aspects, sank now into the baser art which wished to excite, at any cost, the passions of the audience by representing human nature in unnatural aspects.

90. In **Massinger and Ford** this evil is just as plainly marked. Massinger's first dated play was the *Virgin Martyr*, 1620. He lived poor, and died "a stranger," in 1639. In these twenty years he wrote thirty-seven plays, of which the *New Way to Pay Old Debts* is the best known by its character of Sir Giles Overreach. No writer is fouler in language, and there is a want of unity of impression both in his plots and in his characters. He often sacrifices art to effect, and "unlike Shakespeare, seems often to despise his own characters." On the other hand, his versification and language are flexible and strong, "and seem to rise out of the passions he describes." He speaks the tongue of real life. His men and women are far more natural than those of Beaumont

and Fletcher, and with all his coarseness, he is the most moral of the secondary dramatists. Nowhere is his work so great as when he represents the brave man struggling through trial to victory, the pure woman suffering for the sake of truth and love; or when he describes the terrors that conscience brings on injustice and cruelty. JOHN FORD, his contemporary, published his first play, the *Lover's Melancholy*, in 1629, and five years after, *Perkin Warbeck*, the best historical drama after Shakespeare. Between these dates appeared others, of which the best is the *Broken Heart*. He carried to an extreme the tendency of the drama to unnatural and horrible subjects, but he did so with very great power. He has no comic humour, but no man has described better the worn and tortured human heart.

91. **Webster and other Dramatists.**—Higher as a poet, and possessing the same power as Ford, though not the same exquisite tenderness, was JOHN WEBSTER, whose best drama, *The Duchess of Malfi*, was acted in 1616. *Vittoria Corombona* was printed in 1612, and was followed by the *Devil's Law Case*, *Appius and Virginia*, and others. Webster's peculiar power of creating ghastly horror is redeemed from sensationalism by his poetic insight. His imagination easily saw, and expressed in short and intense lines, the inmost thoughts and feelings of characters whom he represents as wrought on by misery, or crime, or remorse, at their very highest point of passion. In his worst characters there is some redeeming touch, and this poetic pity brings him nearer to Shakespeare than the rest. He is also neither so coarse, nor so great a king worshipper, nor so irreligious as the others. We seem to taste the Puritan in his work. Two comedies *Westward Ho!* and *Northward Ho!* remarkable for the light they throw on the manners of the time, were written by him along with THOMAS DEKKER. JOHN CHAPMAN is the only one of

the later Elizabethan dramatists who kept the old fire of Marlowe, though he never had the naturalness or temperance which lifted Shakespeare far beyond Marlowe. The same power which we have seen in his translation of Homer is to be found in his plays. The mingling of intellectual power with imagination, swollen violence of words and images with tender and natural and often splendid passages, is entirely in the earlier Elizabethan manner. He too, like Marlowe, to quote his own line, "hurled instinctive fire about the world." These were the greatest names among a crowd of dramatists. We can only mention John Marston, Henry Glapthorne, Richard Browne, William Rowley, Thomas Middleton, Cyril Tourneur, and Thomas Heywood. Of these, "all of whom," says Lamb, "spoke nearly the same language, and had a set of moral feelings and notions in common," JAMES SHIRLEY is the last. He lived till 1666. In him the fire and passion of the old time passes away, but some of the delicate poetry remains, and in him the Elizabethan drama dies. In 1642, the theatres were closed during the calamitous times of the Civil War. Strolling players managed to exist with difficulty, and against the law, till 1656, when SIR WILLIAM DAVENANT had his opera of the *Siege of Rhodes* acted in London. It was the beginning of a new drama, in every point but impurity different from the old, and four years after at the Restoration it broke loose from the prison of Puritanism to indulge in a shameless licence.

In this rapid sketch of the Drama in England we have been carried on beyond the death of Elizabeth to the date of the Restoration. It was necessary, because it keeps the whole story together. We now return to the time that followed the accession of James I.

NOTE.—The dates and arrangement of Shakespeare's plays given above are only tentative. They are so placed by the conjectures of the latest criticism, and the conjectures wait for proof.

CHAPTER V.

FROM ELIZABETH'S DEATH TO THE RESTORATION. 1603—1660.

Lord Bacon, *Advancement of Learning* (two books), **1605**; expanded into nine Latin books, **1623**; *Novum Organon* (first sketch), **1607**; finished, **1620**; *Historia naturalis et experimentalis*, **1622**. These three form the *Instauratio Magna*; last edition of *Essays*, **1625**; dies **1626**.—Giles Fletcher's *Temptation of Christ*, **1610**.—W. Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*, **1613, 16**.—J. Donne's *Poems and Satires*, **1613-1635**.—G. Wither, *Poems*, **1613-1622-1641**.—George Herbert, *Temple*, **1631**—Jeremy Taylor, *Liberty of Prophesying*, **1647**.—R. Herrick, *Hesperides*, **1648**—Hobbe's *Leviathan*, **1651**.—T. Fuller's *Church History*, **1656**.—J. Milton, born **1608**; *First Poem*, **1626**; *L'Allegro*, **1632**; *Comus* and *Lycidas*, **1634-1637**; Prose writings and most of the Sonnets, **1640-1660**; *Paradise Lost*, **1667**; *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, **1671**; dies **1674**.—Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, **1678-1684**.

92. **The Decline of the Elizabethan Literature.—Prose.**—We have traced in the last chapter the decline of the drama of Elizabeth up to the date of the Restoration. All poetry suffered in the same way after the reign of James I. It became fantastic in style and overwrought in thought. It was diffuse, or violent, in expression. *Prose literature*, on the contrary, gradually grew into greater excellence, spread itself over larger fields of thought, and took up a greater variety of subjects. The grave national struggle, while it lessened poetical, increased prose literature. *The painting of short "Characters"* was begun by Sir T. Overbury's book in 1614, and carried on by John Earle and Joseph Hall, afterwards made bishops. They mark the interest in individual life which now began to arise, and which soon took

form in *Biography*. THOMAS FULLER'S *Holy and Profane State*, 1642, added to sketches of "characters," illustrations of them in the lives of famous persons, and in 1662 his *Worthies of England* still further set on foot the literature of Biography. *The historical literature* which we have noticed already in the works of Raleigh and Bacon was carried on by Fuller in his *Church History of Britain*, 1656. He is a quaint and delightful writer; good sense, piety, and inventive wit are woven together in his work. We may place together Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621, and Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, 1642, and *Pseudodoxia* as *books which treat of miscellaneous subjects* in a witty and learned fashion, but without any true scholarship. This kind of writing was greatly increased by the *setting up of libraries* where men dipped into every kind of literature. It was in James I.'s reign that Sir Thomas Bodley established the Bodleian at Oxford, and Sir Robert Cotton a library now placed in the British Museum. A number of small writers took part in the *Puritan and Church controversies*, among whom William Prynne, a violent Puritan, deserves to be mentioned for his *Histrio-Mastix*, or *Scourge of Players*.

But there were others on each side who rose above the war of party into the calm air of *spiritual religion*. JEREMY TAYLOR at the close of Charles I.'s reign published his *Great Exemplar* and his *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, and shortly afterwards his *Sermons*. They had been preceded in 1647 by his *Liberty of Prophesying*, in which he claimed full freedom of Biblical interpretation as the right of all, and asked for only one standard of faith—the Apostles' Creed. His work is especially literary. Weighty with argument, his sermons and books of devotion are still read among us for their sweet and deep devotion, for their rapidly flowing and poetic eloquence. Towards the end of the Civil Wars RICHARD BAXTER, the great

Puritan writer, wrote a little book which, as it still remains a household book in England, takes its place in literature. There are few cottages which do not possess a copy of *The Saint's Everlasting Rest;* and there are few parsonages in England in which ROBERT LEIGHTON'S book on the Epistle of St. Peter is not also to be found. Leighton died in 1684, Archbishop of Glasgow. In philosophic literature I have already spoken of Bacon, and of the political writers, such as Hobbes and Harrington, who wrote during the Commonwealth, I will speak hereafter in their proper place.

Miscellaneous writing is further represented in the *literature of travel* by George Sandys and Thomas Coryat. *Coryat's Crudities*, 1611, describes his journey through France and Italy; Sandys' book, 1615, a journey to the East. We have also from abroad some interesting letters from Sir Henry Wotton, and he gave Milton introductions to famous men in Italy. Wotton's quaint and pleasant friend IZAAK WALTON closes the list of these pre-Restoration writers with the *Compleat Angler*, 1653, a book which resembles in its quaint and garrulous style the rustic scenery and prattling rivers that it celebrates, and marks the quiet interest in the country which now began to grow up in England.

The style of all these writers links them to the age of Elizabeth. It did not follow the weighty gravity of Hooker, or the balanced calm and splendour of Bacon, but rather the witty quaintness of Lyly and of Sydney. The prose of men like Browne and Burton and Fuller is not as poetic as that of these Elizabethan writers, but it is just as fanciful. Even the prose of Jeremy Taylor is over poetical, and though it has all the Elizabethan ardour, it has also the Elizabethan faults of excessive wordiness and involved periods and images. It never knows where to stop. Milton's prose works, which shall be mentioned in their place in his life, are also Elizabethan

in style. Their style has the fire and violence, the eloquence and diffuseness, of the earlier literature, but in spite of the praise it has received, it is in reality scarcely to be called a style. It has all the faults a prose style can have except obscurity and vulgarity. Its bursts of eloquence ought to be in poetry, and it never charms except when Milton becomes purposely simple in personal narrative. There is no pure style in prose writing till Hobbes began to write in English, indeed we may say till after the Restoration, unless we except, on grounds of weight and power, the styles of Bacon and Hooker.

93. **The Decline of Poetry.**—The various elements which we have noticed in the poetry of Elizabeth's reign, without the exception, even, of the slight Catholic element, though opposed to each other were filled with one spirit—the love of England and the Queen. Nor were they ever sharply divided; they are found mixed together and modifying one another in the same poet, as for instance Puritanism and Chivalry in Spenser, Catholicism and Love in Constable; and all are mixed together in Shakespeare and the dramatists. This unity of spirit in poetry became less and less after the Queen's death. The elements remained, but they were separated. Poetry was the bundle of sticks with the cord round it in Elizabeth's time; in the time of Charles I. it was the same bundle with the cord removed and the sticks set apart. The cause of this was that the strife, in politics between the Divine Right of Kings and Liberty, and in religion between the Church and the Puritans, grew so defined and intense that England ceased to be at one, and the poets, though not so strongly as other classes, were separated into sections. A certain style, which induced Johnson to call them "*metaphysical*," belongs more or less to all these poets. They were those, Hallam says, "who laboured after conceits, or novel turns of thought,

usually false, and resting on some equivocation of language or exceedingly remote analogy." This form finds its true source in the fantastic style of the *Euphues* and the *Arcadia*. It grew up again towards the close of Elizabeth's reign and it ended by greatly lessening good sense and clearness in English poetry. It was in the reaction from it, and in the determination to bring clear thought and clear expression of thought into English verse, that the school of Dryden and Pope—the critical school—began. The poetry from the later years of Elizabeth to Milton illustrates all these remarks.

94. **The Lyric Poetry** struck a new note in the songs of Ben Jonson, such as the *Hymn to Diana*. They are less natural, less able to be sung than Shakespeare's, more classical, more artificial. But they have no special tendency. Later on, during the reign of Charles I., and during the Civil War, the lyrics of WILLIAM CAREW, SIR JOHN SUCKLING, COLONEL LOVELACE, and ROBERT HERRICK, whose *Hesperides* was published in 1648, have a special royalist and court character. They are, for the most part, light, pleasant, short songs and epigrams on the passing interests of the day, on the charms of the court beauties, on a lock of hair, a dress, on all the fleeting forms of fleeting love. Here and there we find a pure or pathetic song, and there are few of them which time has selected that do not possess a gay or a gentle grace. As the Civil War deepened, the special court poetry died, and the songs became songs of battle and marching, and devoted and violent loyalty. These have been lately collected under the title of *Songs of the Cavaliers*.

95. **Satirical Poetry,** always arising when natural passion in poetry decays, is represented in the later days of Elizabeth by JOSEPH HALL, afterwards Bishop Hall, whose *Virgidemiarum*, 1597, satires partly in poetry, make him the master satirist of this time. JOHN

DONNE, Dean of St. Paul's, who also partly belongs to the age of Elizabeth, was, with John Cleveland (a furious royalist and satirist of Charles I.'s time), the most obscure and fanciful of the poets absurdly called Metaphysical. Donne, however, rose far above the rest in the beauty of thought and in the tenderness of his religious and love poems. His satires are graphic pictures of the manners of the age of James I. GEORGE WITHER hit the follies and vices of the day so hard in his *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, 1613, that he was put into the Marshalsea prison and there continued his satires in the *Shepherd's Hunting*. As the Puritan and the Royalist became more opposed to one another, satirical poetry naturally became more bitter; but, like the poetry of the Civil War, it took the form of short songs and pieces which went about the country, as those of Bishop Corbet did, in manuscript.

96. **The Rural Poetry.**—The *pastoral* now began to take a more truly rural form than the conventional pastorals of France and Italy out of which it rose. In WILLIAM BROWNE'S *Britannia's Pastorals*, 1616, the element of pleasure in country life arises, and from this time it begins to grow in our poetry. It appears slightly in Wither's *Shepherd's Hunting*, but plainly in his *Mistress of Philarete*, a poem interspersed with lyrics. In dwelling so much as he did on the beauty of natural scenery away from cities he brings a new element into English verse. Henceforth we always find a country poetry set over against a town poetry, a poetry of nature set over against a poetry of man. It is still stronger in ANDREW MARVELL, Milton's secretary, who, with the exception of Milton, did the finest work of this kind. In imaginative intensity, in the fusing together of personal feeling and thought with the delight received from nature, his verses on *The Emigrants in the Bermudas* and *The Thoughts in a Garden*, and the little poem, *The Girl describes her Fawn*, are like the work of Wordsworth on one side, and like the best

Elizabethan work on the other. They are the last and the truest echo of the lyrics of the time of Elizabeth, but they reach beyond them in the love of nature.

97. **Spenserians.**—Among these broken up forms of poetry, there was one kind which was imitative of Spenser. PHINEAS FLETCHER, GILES FLETCHER, HENRY MORE in his *Platonical Song of the Soul*, 1642, and JOHN CHALKHILL in his *Thealma*, owned him as their master. The *Purple Island*, 1633, of the first, an elaborate allegory of the body and mind of man, has some grace and sweetness, and tells us that the scientific element which after the Restoration took form in the setting up of the Royal Society was so far spread in England at his time as to influence the poets.

98. **Religious Poetry.**—*The Temptation and Victory of Christ*, 1610, of Giles Fletcher, is said to have given some hints to Milton for the *Paradise Regained*, and is one of the many religious poems that now began to interest the people. Of all these *The Temple*, 1631, of GEORGE HERBERT, rector of Bemerton, has been the most popular. The purity and profound devotion of its poems have made it dear to all. Its gentle Church feeling has pleased all classes of churchmen; its great quaintness which removes it from true poetry has added perhaps to its charm. With him we must rank HENRY VAUGHAN, the Silurist, whose *Sacred Poems* are equally devotional, pure, and quaint, and Francis Quarles, whose *Divine Emblems*, 1635, is still read in the cottages of England. On the Roman Catholic side, WILLIAM HABINGTON mingled his devotion to his religion with the praises of his wife under the name of *Castara*, 1634; and RICHARD CRASHAW, whose rich inventiveness was not made less rich by the religious mysticism which finally led him to become a Roman Catholic, published his *Steps to the Temple* in 1646. On the Puritan side, we may

now place GEORGE WITHER, whose *Hallelujah*, 1641, a series of religious poems, was sent forth just before the Civil War began, when he left the king's side to support the Parliament. Finally, religious poetry, after the return of Charles II. passed on through the *Davideis* of ABRAHAM COWLEY, and the *Divine Love* of EDMUND WALLER to find its highest expression in the *Paradise Lost*. We have thus traced through all its forms the decline of poetry. It is a poetry often beautiful, but as often spoiled by obscurity, over-fancifulness, confusion of thought and of images. From this decay we pass into a new created world when we come to speak of Milton. Between the dying poetry of the past, and the uprising of a new kind of poetry in Dryden, stands alone the majestic work of a great genius who touches the Elizabethan time with one hand and our own time with the other.

99. **John Milton** was the last of the Elizabethans, and, except Shakespeare, far the greatest of them all. Born in 1608, in Bread-street, he may have seen Shakespeare, for he remained till he was sixteen in London. His literary life may be said to begin with his entrance into Cambridge, in 1625, the year of the accession of Charles I. Nicknamed the "lady" from his beauty and delicate taste and morality, he got soon a great fame, and during the seven years of his life at the university his poetic genius opened itself in the English poems of which I give the dates. *On the Death of a Fair Infant*, 1626. *At a Vacation Exercise*, 1628. *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, 1629. *On the Circumcision, The Passion, Time, At a Solemn Musick, On the May Morning, On Shakespeare*, 1630. *On the University Carrier, Epitaph on Marchioness of Worcester, Sonnet*, 1., *To the Nightingale, Sonnet*, 2., *On Arriving at Age of Twenty-three*, 1631. The last sonnet, when explained by a letter that accompanied it, shows that Milton, influenced by the

persecution of the Puritans, had given up his intention of becoming a clergyman. He left therefore the university in 1632, and went to live at Horton, near Windsor, where he spent five years, steadily reading the Greek and Latin writers, and amusing himself with mathematics and music. Poetry was not neglected. The *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* were written in 1632 and probably the *Arcades; Comus* in 1634, and *Lycidas* in 1637. They all prove that though Milton was Puritan in heart, his Puritanism was of that earlier type which neither disdained literature, art, or gaiety, nor despised the ancient Church, nor turned away from natural beauty. He could still enjoy the village dance, the masque, the lists, the music in the dim Cathedral; he could still mingle the learning of the Renaissance with his delight in the fields and flowers, with his feasting and his grief. He was as much the child of the New Learning as Spenser was, but his Puritanism was set deeper than Spenser's.

In 1638 he went to Italy, the second home of so many of the English poets, and visited the great towns, making friends in Florence where he saw Galileo, and in Rome. At Naples he heard the sad news of civil war, which determined him to return; "inasmuch as I thought it base to be travelling at my ease for intellectual culture, while my fellow-countrymen at home were fighting for liberty." But, hearing that the war had not yet arisen, he remained in Italy till the end of 1639, and at the meeting of the Long Parliament we find him in a house in Aldersgate, where he lived till 1645. He had projected while abroad, a great epic poem on the subject of Arthur (again the Welsh subject returns), but in London his mind changed, and among a number of subjects, tended at last to *Paradise Lost*, which he meant to throw into the form of a Greek Tragedy with lyrics and choruses.

100. **Milton's Prose. The Commonwealth.**—Suddenly his whole life changed, and for twenty years—1640-1660—he was carried out of art into politics, out of poetry into prose. Before 1642, when the Civil War began, he had written five vigorous pamphlets against episcopacy. Six more pamphlets appeared in the next two years. One of these was the *Areopagitica; or, Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*, 1644, a bold and eloquent attack on the censorship of the press by the Presbyterians. The four pamphlets in which he advocated conditional divorce made him still more the horror of the Presbyterians. When on the execution of the king, 1649, England became a republic Milton defended the act, in an answer to the *Eikon Basilike* (a portraiture of the sufferings of the king by Dr. Gauden), and continued to defend it in his famous Latin *Defence for the People of England* (1651), in which he inflicted so pitiless a lashing on Salmasius, the great Leyden scholar, that his fame went over the whole of Europe. In the next year he wholly lost his sight. But he continued his work when Cromwell was made Protector, and wrote another *Defence for the English People*, and a further defence of himself against scurrilous charges. This closed the controversy in 1655. In the last year of the Protector's life he began the *Paradise Lost*, about the date of the last of his sonnets. The two years that came before the Restoration were employed in a fruitless effort to prevent it by the publication of six more pamphlets. It was a wonder he was not put to death, and he was in hiding and in custody for a time. At last he settled in a house near Bunhill Fields. It was here that *Paradise Lost* was finished, before the end of 1665, and then published in 1667.

101. **Paradise Lost.**—We may perhaps regret that our greatest poet was shut away from his art for twenty years during which no verse was written

but the sonnets. But it may be that the poems he wrote, when the great cause he fought for had closed in seeming defeat but real victory, gained from its solemn issues and from the moral grandeur with which he wrought for its ends their majestic movement, their grand style, and their grave beauty. During the struggle he had never forgotten his art. "I may one day hope," he said, speaking of his youthful studies, "to have ye again, in a still time, when there shall be no chiding. Not in these Noises," and the saying strikes the note of calm sublimity which is kept in *Paradise Lost*. It opens with the awaking of the rebel angels in Hell after their fall from Heaven, the consultation of their chiefs how best to carry on the war with God, and the resolve of Satan to go forth and tempt newly created man to fall. He takes his flight to the earth and finds Eden. Eden is then described, and Adam and Eve in their innocence. The next four books, from the fifth to the eighth, contain the Archangel Raphael's story of the war in heaven, the fall of Satan, and the creation of the world. The last four books describe the temptation and the fall of Man, the vision shown by Michael to Adam of the future, and of the redemption of Man by Christ, and the expulsion from Paradise.

As we read the great epic, we feel that the lightness and grace of Milton's youthful time is gone. The beauty of the poem is rather that of ideal purity, and of sublime thought expressed in language which has the severe loveliness of the best Greek sculpture. The interest collects round the character of Satan at first, but he grows more and more mean as the poem goes on, and seems to fall a second time, to lose all his original brightness, after his temptation of Eve. Indeed this second degradation of Satan after he has not only sinned himself but made innocence sin, and beaten back in himself the last remains of good, is one of the finest motives in the poem. At last all

thought and emotion centre round Adam and Eve, until the closing lines leave us with their lonely image on our minds. In every part of the poem, in every character in it (as indeed), in all his poems, Milton's intense individuality appears. It is a pleasure to find it. The egotism of such a man, said Coleridge, is a revelation of spirit.

102. **Milton's Later Poems.**—It was followed by *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, published together in 1671. *Paradise Regained* opens with the journey of Christ into the wilderness after his baptism, and its four books describe the temptation of Christ by Satan, and the answers and victory of the Redeemer. The speeches in it drown the action, and their learned argument is only relieved by a few descriptions; but these, as in that of Athens, are done with Milton's highest power. The same solemn beauty of a quiet mind and a more severe style than that of *Paradise Lost* make us feel in it that Milton has grown older.

In *Samson Agonistes*, the style is still severer, even to the verge of a harshness which the sublimity alone tends to modify. It is a choral drama, after the Greek model. Samson in his blindness is described, is called on to make sport for the Philistines, and overthrows them in the end. He represents the fallen Puritan cause, and his victory in death Milton's hopes for its final triumph. The poem has all the grandeur of the last words of a great man in whom there was now "calm of mind, all passion spent." He wrote it blind and old and fallen on evil days. But in it, as in the others, blindness did not prevent sight. No man saw more vividly and could say more vividly what he saw. Nor did age make him lose strength. The force of thought and verse in his last poem is only less than in *Paradise Lost*. Nor did evil days touch his imagination with weakness,

or make less the dignity of his art. Till the end it was

> "An undisturbéd song of pure consent,
> Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne,
> To Him that sits thereon."

It ended in his death, November 1674.

103. **His Work.**—To the greatness of the artist Milton joined the majesty of a pure and lofty character. His poetic style was as lofty as his character, and proceeded from it. Living at a time when criticism began to purify the verse of England, and being himself well acquainted with the great classical models, his work is free from the false conceits and the intemperance of the Elizabethan writers, and yet is as imaginative as theirs, and as various. He has their grace, naturalness, and intensity, when he chooses, and he adds to it a sublime dignity which they did not possess. All the kinds of poetry which he touched, he touched with the ease of great strength, and with so much weight, that they became new in his hands. He put a new life into the masque, the sonnet, the elegy, the descriptive lyric, the song, the choral drama; and he created the epic in England. The lighter love poem he never wrote, and he kept satire for prose. In some points he was untrue to his descent from the Elizabethans, for he had no dramatic faculty and he had no humour. He summed up in himself all the higher influences of the Renaissance, and when they had died in England revived and handed them to us. His taste was as severe, his verse as polished, his method and language as strict as those of the school of Dryden and Pope that grew up when he was old. A literary past and present thus met in him, nor did he fail, like all the greatest men, to make a cast into the future. He began that pure poetry of natural description which has no higher examples to

show in Wordsworth or Scott or Keats than his *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Lastly, he did not represent in any way the England that followed the tyranny, the coarseness, the sensuality, the falseness, or the irreligion of the Stuarts, but he did represent Puritan England, and the whole career of Puritanism from its cradle to its grave.

104. **The Pilgrim's Progress.**—With Milton the great Elizabethan age of imaginative poetry and the spirit of the New Learning said their last word. We might say that Puritanism also said its last great words with him, were it not that its spirit lasted in English life, were it not also that four years after his death, in 1678, JOHN BUNYAN, who had previously written much, published the *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is the journey of Christian, the Pilgrim, from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. The *second part* was published in 1684, and in 1682, the allegory of the *Holy War*. I class the *Pilgrim's Progress* here, because in its imaginative fervour and poetry, and in its quality of naturalness, it belongs to the spirit of the Elizabethan times. It belongs also to that time in this, that its simple and clear form grew up out of passionate feeling and not out of self-conscious art. It is a people's book and not the book of a literary class, and yet it lives in literature because it first revealed the poetry which fervent belief in a spiritual world can kindle in the rudest hearts. In doing this, and in painting the various changes and feelings of the pilgrim's progress towards God, the book touched the deepest human interests, and set on foot a new and plentiful literature. Its language is the language of the Bible. It is a prose allegory conceived as an epic poem. As such, it admits the vivid dramatic dialogue, the episodes, the descriptions, and the clear drawing of types of character which give a different, but an equal pleasure to a peasant boy and to an intellect like Lord Macaulay's.

CHAPTER VI.

FROM THE RESTORATION TO GEORGE III.

1660—1760.

Sir John Denham's *Cooper's Hill*, **1643**.—Hobbe's *Leviathan*, **1651**.—Butler's *Hudibras*, **1663**.—J. Dryden, born **1631**; his *Dramas* begin, **1663**; *Absalom and Ahitophel*, **1681**; *Hind and Panther*, **1687**; *Fables* and death, **1700**.—Wycherley, Congreve, Farquhar, and Vanbrugh, *Dramas*, from **1672–1726**.—Newton's *Principia*, **1687**.—Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, **1690**.—Alexander Pope, born **1688**; *Pastorals*, **1709**; *Rape of the Lock*, **1712**; *Homer* finished, **1725**; *Essay on Man*, **1732–1734**; *Dunciad* finished, **1741**; dies, **1744**.—Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, **1704**; *Gulliver's Travels*, **1726**.—Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, **1719**.—Steele and Addison, *Spectator*, **1711**.—Addison's *Cato*, **1713**.—Johnson's *Irene*, **1749**.—Sheridan and Goldsmith's *Plays*, **1768–1778**.

THE LITERATURE OF THE RESTORATION AND REVOLUTION.

105. **Poetry. Change of Style.**—We have seen the natural style as distinguished from the artificial in the Elizabethan poets. Style became not only natural but artistic when it was used by a great genius like Shakespeare or Spenser, for a first rate poet creates rules of art; his work itself is art. But when the art of poetry is making, its rules are not laid down, and the second rate poets, inspired only by their feelings, will write in a natural style unrestrained by rules, that is, they will put their feelings into verse without caring much for the form in which they do it. As long as they live in the midst of a youthful national life, and feel an ardent sympathy with it, their style will be fresh and impassioned, and give pleasure because of the strong feeling that inspires it. But it will also be extravagant and unrestrained in its use of images and words, because of its want of art. This is the history of the style of the poets of the middle period of Elizabeth's reign. (2) Afterwards the national life grew chill, and the feelings of the poets also chill. Then the want of art in the style made itself felt. The far-fetched images, the hazarded meanings, the over-fanciful way of putting thoughts, the sensational expression of feeling, in which the Elizabethan poets indulged, not only appeared in all their ugliness when they were inspired by no warm feeling, but were indulged in far more than before. Men tried to produce by extravagant use of words the same results that living feeling had produced, and the more they failed the more extravagant and fantastic they became, till at last their poetry ceased to have clear meaning. This is the history of the style of the poets from the later days of Elizabeth till the Civil War. (3) The natural style, unregulated by art, had thus become unnatural. When it had reached that point, men began to feel how necessary it was that the style of poetry should be subjected to the rules of art, and two influences partly caused and partly supported this desire. One was the influence of Milton. Milton, first by his genius, which as I said creates of itself an artistic style, and secondly by his knowledge and imitation of the great classical models was able to give the first example in England of a pure, grand, and finished style, and in blank verse and the sonnet, wrote for the first time with absolute correctness. Another influence was that of the movement all over Europe towards inquiry into the right way of doing things, and into the truth of things, a movement we shall soon see at work in science, politics, and religion. In poetry it produced a school of criticism which

first took form in France, and the influence of Boileau, La Fontaine, and others who were striving after greater finish and neatness of expression told on England now. It is an influence which has been exaggerated. It is absurd to place the "creaking lyre" of Boileau side by side with Dryden's "long resounding march and energy divine" of verse. Our critical school of poets have no French qualities in them even when they imitate the French. (4) Further, our own poets had already, before the Restoration, begun the critical work, and the French influence served only to give it a greater impulse. We shall see the growth of a colder and more correct spirit of art in Cowley, Denham, and Waller. Vigorous form was given to that spirit by Dryden, and perfection of artifice added to it by Pope. The *artificial* style succeeded to and extinguished the *natural*.

106. **Change of Poetic Subject.**—The subject of the Elizabethan poets was Man as influenced by the *Passions*, and it was treated from the side of natural feeling. This was fully and splendidly done by Shakespeare. But after a time the subject followed, as we have seen in speaking of the drama, the same career as the style. It was treated in an extravagant and sensational manner, and the representation of the passions tended to become, and did become unnatural or fantastic. Milton alone redeemed the subject from this vicious excess. He wrote in a grave and natural manner of the passions of the human heart, and he introduced the religious passions of love of God, sorrow for sin, and others, into English poetry. But with him the subject of man as influenced by the passions died for a time. Dryden, Pope, and their followers, turned to another. They left the passions aside, and wrote of the things in which the intellect and the conscience, the social and political instincts in man were interested. In this way the satiric, didactic, philosophical, and party poetry of a new school arose.

107. **Transition Poets.**—There were a few poets, writing partly before and partly after the Restoration, who represent the passage from the fantastic to the more correct style. ABRAHAM COWLEY was one of these. His love poems, *The Mistress*, 1647, are courtly, witty, and have some of the Elizabethan imagination. His later poems, owing probably to his life in France, were more exact in verse, and more cold in form. The same may be said of EDMUND WALLER, who "first made writing in rhyme easily an art." He also lived a long time in France, and died in 1687. Sir Jno. Denham's *Cooper's Hill*, 1643, was a favourite with Dryden for the "majesty of its style." It may rank as one of the first of our descriptive poems, and its didactic reflectiveness, and the chill stream of its verse and thought, link him closely to Pope. Sir W. Davenant's *Gondibert*, 1651, an heroic poem, is perhaps the most striking example of this transition. Worthless as poetry, it represents the new interest in political philosophy and in science that was arising, and preludes the intellectual poetry. Its preface discourses of rime and the rules of art, and represents the new critical influence which came over with the exiled court from France. The critical school had therefore begun even before Dryden's poems were written. The change was less sudden than it seemed.

Satiric poetry, soon to become a greater thing, was made during this transition time into a powerful weapon by two men, each on a different side. Andrew Marvell's *Satires*, after the Restoration, represent the Puritan's wrath with the vices of the court and king, and his shame for the disgrace of England among the nations. The *Hudibras* of SAMUEL BUTLER, in 1663, represents the fierce reaction which had set in against Puritanism. It is justly famed for wit, learning, good sense, and ingenious drollery, and in accordance with the new criticism, it is absolutely without obscurity. It is

often as terse as Pope's best work. But it is too long, its wit wearies us at last, and it undoes the force of its attack on the Puritans by its exaggeration. Satire should have at least the semblance of truth; yet Butler calls the Puritans cowards. We turn now to the first of these poets in whom poetry is founded on intellect rather than on feeling, and whose best verse is devoted to argument and satire.

108. **John Dryden** was the first of the new, as Milton was the last of the elder, school of poetry. It was late in life that he gained fame. Born in 1631, he was a Cromwellite till the Restoration, when he began the changes which mark his life. His poem on the death of the Protector was soon followed by the *Astræa Redux* which celebrated the return of justice to the realm in the person of Charles II. The *Annus Mirabilis* appeared in 1667, and in this his great power was first clearly shown. It is the power of clear reasoning expressing itself with entire ease in a rapid succession of condensed thoughts in verse. Such a power fitted Dryden for satire, and his *Absalom* and *Achitophel* is the foremost of English satires. He had been a playwriter till its appearance in 1681, and the rimed plays which he had written enabled him to perfect the versification which is so remarkable in it and the poems that followed. The satire itself, written in mockery of the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Bill, attacked Shaftesbury as Ahitophel, was kind to Monmouth as Absalom, and in its sketch of Buckingham as Zimri the poet avenged himself for the *Rehearsal*. It was the first fine example of that party poetry which became still more bitter and personal in the hands of Pope. It was followed by the *Medal*, a new attack on Shaftesbury, and the *Mac Flecknoe*, in which Shadwell, a rival poet, who had supported Shaftesbury's party, was made a laughing-stock. After these Dryden taught theology in verse, and the *Religio*

Laici, 1682, defends, and states the argument for, the Church of England. It was perhaps poverty that drove him on the accession of James II. to change his religion, and the *Hind and Panther*, 1687, is as fine a model of clear reasoning in behalf of the milk-white hind of the Church of Rome, as the *Religio Laici* was in behalf of the Church of England, which now becomes the spotted panther. As a narrative poet his fables and translations, produced late in life, in 1700, give him a high rank, though the fine harmony of their verse does not win us to forget their coarseness, and their lack of that skill in arranging a story which comes from imaginative feeling. As a lyric poet his fame rests on the animated *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*. His translation of *Vergil* has fire, but wants the dignity and tenderness of the original. From Milton's death till his own in 1700, Dryden reigned undisputed, and round his throne in Will's Coffeehouse where he sat as "Glorious John" we may place the names of the lesser poets, the Earls of Dorset, Roscommon, and Mulgrave, Sir Charles Sedley, and the Earl of Rochester. The lighter poetry of the court lived on in the two last. John Oldham won a short fame by his *Satires on the Jesuits*, 1679; and Bishop Ken, 1668, set on foot, in his *Morning and Evening Hymns*, a new type of religious poetry.

109. **The Drama of the Restoration.**—The change that now passed over literature was as great in the drama as in poetry. Two acting companies were formed on the king's return under Thomas Killigrew and Davenant; actresses came on the stage for the first time, and scenery began to be used. Dryden began his dramatic work with comedies, 1663, but soon after, following Corneille, though he abjured French influence, made rime instead of blank verse the vehicle of tragedy. His tragedies, like the rest of the time, were written in a pompous heroic style. The

Duke of Buckingham ridiculed them in the *Rehearsal*, 1671, and sometime after Dryden changed his style, and wrote in another manner, of which *All for Love*, and the *Spanish Friar*, are perhaps the best examples. His plays have but little sentiment, for Dryden's treatment of the emotions is always brutal, but they have some neat intrigue, some fine passages. John Crowne's *Sir Courtly Nice*, Nat. Lee's *Rival Queens*, and two pathetic tragedies by Thomas Otway, *The Orphan* and *Venice Preserved*, are of the Restoration time and kept the stage.

It was in Comedy that the dramatists of the Restoration excelled. WILLIAM WYCHERLEY, whose gross vigour is remarkable, introduced the prose Comedy of Manners, in 1672, and Mrs. Behn, Sir George Etherege, and others, carried it on to the Revolution. The wit of their comedies is the wit of a vulgar and licentious society. After the Revolution, WILLIAM CONGREVE, SIR JOHN VANBRUGH, and GEORGE FARQUAR made comedy more gentlemanly and its intrigue more subtle. Though without truth to nature, their plays sparkle with wit in every line. They exaggerate the vices of the time, but their immorality is partly forgotten in their swift and delightful gaiety. Poetry, however, was less an important part of literature during this period than prose.

110. **The Prose Literature.**—I have said that towards the end of Elizabeth's reign men settled down to think and inquire. Intellectual had succeeded to active life. We have seen this in the poetry of the time; and the great work of BACON, which was then begun, represents the same thing in prose. He worked at not only all subjects of inquiry, but also at the right method of enquiry. The *Advancement of Learning* and the *Novum Organum* did not fulfil all he aimed at, but they did stir the whole of English intelligence into activity. In **Science**, the impulse he gave was only partly right, and the work of Science in England was behind that of the Continent. The religious

and the political struggle absorbed the country, and it was not till after the Restoration, with two exceptions, that scientific discovery advanced so far as to claim recognition in a history of Literature. The Royal Society was embodied in 1662, and astronomy, experimental chemistry, medicine, mineralogy, zoology, botany, vegetable physiology were all founded as studies and their literature begun in the age of the Restoration. One man's work was so great in science as to merit his name being mentioned among the literary men of England. In 1671, Isaac Newton laid his *Theory of Light* before the Royal Society; in the year before the Revolution his *Principia* established with its proof of the theory of gravitation the true system of the universe.

It was in political and religious knowledge however that the intellectual inquiry of the nation was most shown. When the thinking spirit succeeds the active and adventurous in a people, the first thing they will think upon is the true method and grounds of government, both divine and human. Two sides will be taken, the side of Authority and the side of Reason in Religion; the side of Authority and the side of Individual Liberty in Politics.

111. **The Theological Literature** of those who declared that reason was supreme as a test of truth, arose with some men who met at Lord Falkland's just before the civil war, and especially with JOHN HALES and WILLIAM CHILLINGWORTH. With them, Jeremy Taylor pleaded, as we have seen, the cause of religious liberty and toleration, and of rightness of life as more important than a correct theology. After the Restoration and Revolution, their work was carried on by Bishop Burnet, Robert Boyle, the philosopher, Archbishop Tillotson, and BISHOP BUTLER, whose *Sermons* and *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature*, 1736, endeavour to make peace between Authority and Reason. Many other divines of

the English Church took one side or another, or opposed the growing Deism. Isaac Barrow is to be mentioned for his sedate, Robert South for his fierce and witty eloquence, and in them, and in men like Edward Stillingfleet and William Sherlock, English theological prose took form.

112. **Political Literature.**—The resistance to authority in the opposition to the theory of the Divine Right of Kings did not enter into Literature till after it had been worked out practically in the Civil War. During the Commonwealth and after the Revolution it took the form of a discussion on the abstract question of the Science of Government, and was mingled with an inquiry into the origin of society and the ground of social life. THOMAS HOBBES, during the Commonwealth, was the first who dealt with the question from the side of reason alone, and he is also the first of all our prose writers whose style may be said to be uniform and correct, and adapted carefully to the subjects on which he wrote. His treatise, the *Leviathan*, 1651, declared (1) that the origin of all power was in the people, and (2) the end of all power was for the common weal. It destroyed the theory of a Divine Right of Kings and Priests, but it created another kind of Divine Right when it said that the power lodged in rulers by the people could not be taken away by the people. Sir R. Filmer supported the side of Divine Right in his *Patriarcha*, published, 1680. Henry Nevile in his *Dialogue concerning Government*, and James Harrington in his romance *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, published at the beginning of the Commonwealth, contended that all secure government was to be based on property, but Nevile supported a monarchy, and Harrington—with whom I may class Algernon Sidney, executed in 1683—a democracy, on this basis.

113. **John Locke**, after the Revolution, in 1689-1690 followed the two doctrines of Hobbes in his treatise on *Civil Government*, but with these important

additions—(1) that the people have a right to take away the power given by them to the ruler, (2) that the ruler is responsible to the people for the trust reposed in him, and (3) that legislative assemblies are Supreme as the voice of the people. This was the political philosophy of the Revolution. Locke carried the same spirit of free inquiry into the realm of religion, and in his three *Letters on Toleration* 1689-90-92, laid down the philosophical grounds for liberty of religious thought. He finished by entering the realm of metaphysical inquiry. In 1690 appeared his *Essay concerning the Human Understanding*, in which he investigated its limits and traced all ideas and therefore all knowledge to experience. In his clear statement of the way in which the Understanding works, in the way in which he guarded it and Language against their errors in the inquiry after truth, he did as much for the true method of thinking as Bacon had done for the Science of nature.

114. The intellectual stir of the time produced, apart from the great movement of thought, a good deal of **Miscellaneous Literature.** Sir William Petty, in 1667, made the first effort after a science of political economy in his *Treatise on Taxes*. Characters, essays, letter-writing, memoirs, all come to the front. The painting of short "*characters*" was carried on after the Restoration by Saml. Butler, and W. Charleton. These "characters" had no personality, but as party spirit deepened, names thinly disguised were given to characters drawn of living men, and Dryden and Pope in poetry and all the prose wits of the time of Queen Anne and George 1. made personal and often violent sketches of their opponents a special element in literature. After the Restoration, Cowley's small volume, and Dryden, in the masterly criticism on his art which he prefixed to some of his dramas, gave richness to *the Essay*. These two writers began—with Hobbes—the second period of English prose,

in which the style is easy, unaffected, moulded to the subject, and the proper words are put in their proper places. It is as different from the style that came before it, as the easy manners of a gentleman are from those of a learned man unaccustomed to society. In William III's. time Sir W. Temple's pleasant *Essays* bring us in style and tone nearer to the great class of essayists of whom Addison was chief. Lady Rachel Russell's Letters begin the *letter-writing literature* of England, in which Gray and Cowper, Byron and Beckford, have done the best work. Pepys (1660-69) and Evelyn, whose Diary grows full after 1640, begin that class of gossiping *memoirs* which have been of so much use in giving colour to history. *History* itself at this time is little better than *memoirs*, and such a name may be fairly given to Clarendon's *History of the Civil Wars* (begun in 1641) and to Bishop Burnet's *History of his own Time* and to his *History of the Reformation* (begun in 1679, completed in 1715). Finally *classical criticism*, in the discussion on the genuineness of the Letters of Phalaris, was created by Richard Bentley in 1697-99.

115. **The Literature of Queen Anne and the first Georges.**—With the closing years of William III. and the accession of Queen Anne (1702) a literature arose which was partly new and partly a continuance of that of the Restoration. The conflict between those who took the oath to the new dynasty and the Nonjurors who refused, the hot blood that it produced, the war between Dissent and Church and between the two parties which now took the names of Whig and Tory, produced a mass of political pamphlets, of which Daniel Defoe's and Swift's were the best; of songs and ballads, like *Lillibullero*, which were sung in every street; of squibs, reviews, and satirical poems and letters. Everyone joined in it, and it rose into importance in the work of the greater men who mingled more literary studies with their political excitement.

In politics all the abstract discussions we have mentioned ceased to be abstract and became personal and practical, and the spirit of inquiry applied itself more closely to the questions of everyday life. The whole of this stirring literary life was concentrated in London, where the agitation of society was hottest; and it is round this vivid city life that the Literature of Queen Anne and the two following reigns is best grouped.

116. **Party Literature.** It was with a few exceptions The Whig and Tory leaders enlisted on their sides the best poets and prose writers, who fiercely satirized and unduly praised them under names thinly disguised. Personalities were sent to and fro like shots in battle. Those who could do this work well were well rewarded, but the rank and file of writers were left to starve. Literature was thus honoured not for itself, but for the sake of party. The result was that the abler men lowered it by making it a political tool, and the smaller men, the fry of Grub Street, degraded it by using it in the same way, only in a baser manner. Their flattery was as abject as their abuse was shameless, and both were stupid. They received and deserved the merciless lashing which Pope was soon to give them in the *Dunciad*. Being a party literature, it naturally came to study and to look sharply into human character and into human life as seen in the great city. It discussed all the varieties of social life, and painted town society more vividly than has been done before or since; and it was so wholly taken up with this that country life and its interests, except in the writings of Addison, was scarcely touched by it at all. The society of the day was one in which all subjects of intellectual and scientific inquiry were eagerly debated, and the wit of this society was stimulated by its party spirit. Its literature reflected this intellectual excitement, and at no time in our history was literary work so vigorous and masculine on the various problems of thought and know-

ledge. Criticism being so active, the *form* in which thought was expressed was now especially dwelt on, and the result was that the style of English prose became for the first time absolutely simple and clear, and English verse reached a neatness of expression and a closeness of thought which was as exquisite as it was artificial. At the same time, and for the same reasons, Nature, Passion, and Imagination decayed in poetry.

117. **Alexander Pope** absorbed and reflected all these elements. Born in 1688, he wrote excellent verse at twelve years old; the *Pastorals* appeared in 1709, and two years afterwards he took full rank as the critical poet in the *Essay on Criticism* (1711). The next year saw the first cast of his *Rape of the Lock*, the "epos of society under Queen Anne," and the most brilliant play of wit in our language. This closed what we may call his first period. He now became known to Swift and to Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, a statesman who was also a writer. With these, and with Gay, Parnell, Prior, and Arbuthnot, Pope formed the Scriblerus Club, and soon rose into great fame by his *Translation of the Iliad and Odyssey* under George I. (1715-1725), for which he received 7,000 pounds. He now, being at ease, lived at Twickenham, where he had completed his Homer. It was here, retired from the literary mob, that in bitter scorn of the many petty scribblers, he wrote in 1728 the *Dunciad*, afterwards altered and enlarged, in 1741. It was the fiercest of his satires and it closes his second period, which took much of its savageness from the influence of Swift. The third phase of Pope's literary life was closely linked to his friend Bolingbroke. It was in conversation with him that he originated the *Essay on Man* (1732-4), and the *Imitations of Horace*. The *Moral Essays*, or Epistles to men and women, were written to praise those whom he loved, and to satirize the bad poets and the social follies of the day, and all who

disliked him or his party. In the last few years of his life, Bishop Warburton, the writer of the *Legation of Moses* and editor of Shakespeare, helped him to fit the *Moral Essays* into the plan of which the *Essay on Man* formed part. Warburton was Pope's last great friend; but almost his only old friend. By 1740 nearly all the members of his literary circle were dead, and a new race of poets and writers had grown up. In 1744 he died. He is our greatest master in didactic poetry, not so much because of the worth of the thoughts, as because of the masterly form in which they are put. The *Essay on Man*, though its philosophy is poor and not his own, is crowded with lines that have passed into daily use. The *Essay on Criticism* is equally full of critical precepts put with exquisite skill. The *Satires* and *Epistles* are also didactic. They set virtue and cleverness over against vice and stupidity, and they illustrate both by types of character, in the drawing of which Pope is without a rival in our literature. His translation of Homer is made with great literary art, but for that very reason it does not make us feel the simplicity and directness of Homer. It has neither the manner of Homer, nor the spirit of the Greek life, just as Pope's descriptions of nature have neither the manner nor the spirit of nature. The *heroic couplet*, in which he wrote his translation and nearly all his work, he used in various subjects with a correctness that has never been surpassed, but it sometimes fails from being too smooth, and its cadences too regular. Finally, he was a true artist, hating those who degraded his art, and at a time when men followed it for money, and place, and the applause of the club and of the town, he loved it faithfully to the end, for its own sake.

118. **The Minor Poets** who surrounded Pope in the first two-thirds of his life did not write in his manner nor approach his genius. THOMAS PARNELL is known by his *Hermit*, and both he and JOHN GAY, in his six

pastorals, *The Shepherd's Week* (1714), touched on country life. Swift's poetical satires were coarse but always hit home; Addison celebrated the battle of Blenheim in the *Campaign*, and his sweet grace is found in some devotional pieces; while PRIOR's charming ease is best shown in the light narrative poetry which I may say began with him in the reign of William III. The *Black-eyed Susan* of Gay, and Tickell's *Colin and Lucy* and Carey's *Sally in our Alley*, and afterwards Goldsmith's *Edwin and Angelina* mark the rise of the *modern ballad*; a class of poetry wholly apart from the genius of Pope. When we next speak of the poets we shall see how during Pope's later life, an entirely new impulse came on poetry, and changed it root and branch.

119. **The Prose Literature** of Pope's time collects itself round four great names, Swift, Defoe, Addison, and Bishop Berkeley, and they all exhibit those elements of the age of which I have spoken. JONATHAN SWIFT was the keenest of political partizans. The *Battle of the Books*, or the literary fight about the *Letters of Phalaris*, and the *Tale of a Tub*, a satire on the Presbyterians and the Papists, made his reputation in 1704 and established him as a satirist. Swift left the Whig for the Tory party, and his political tracts brought him Court favour and literary fame. On the fall of the Tory party at the accession of George I., he retired to the Deanery of St. Patrick in Ireland an embittered man, and the *Drapier's Letters* (1724) written against Wood's halfpence, gained him popularity in a country that he hated. In 1726, his inventive genius, his savage satire, and his cruel indignation with life, were all shown in *Gulliver's Travels*. The voyage to Lilliput and Brobdingnag satirized the politics and manners of England and Europe; that to Laputa mocked the philosophers; and the last, to the country of the Houyhnhnms, lacerated and defiled the whole body of humanity. No English

is more robust than Swift's, no wit more scathing, no life in private and public more sad and proud, no death more pitiable. He died in 1745 hopelessly insane. DANIEL DEFOE was almost as vigorous a political writer as Swift, but he will live in literature by *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). In it he equalled *Gulliver's Travels* in truthful representation, and excelled them in invention. The story lives and charms from day to day. With his other tales it makes him our first fine writer of fiction. But none of his stories are true novels; that is, they have no plot to the working out of which the characters and the events contribute. They form the transition however from the slight tale and the romance of the Elizabethan time to the finished novel of Richardson and Fielding.

120. **Metaphysical Literature** was enriched by the work of BISHOP BERKELEY. His *Minute Philosopher* and other works questioned the real existence of matter, and founded on the denial of it an answer to the English Deists, round whom in the first half of the eighteenth century centred the struggle between the claims of natural and revealed religion. Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, and Wollaston, Tindal, Toland, and Collins, on the Deists' side, were opposed by Clarke, by Bentley, whose name is best known as the founder of the true school of classical criticism, and by Bishop Warburton. I may mention here a social satire, *The Fable of the Bees*, by MANDEVILLE, half poem, half prose dialogue, and finished in 1729. It tried to prove that the vices of society are the foundation of civilisation, and is the first of a new set of books which marked the rise in England of the bold speculations on the nature and ground of society which the French Revolution afterwards increased.

121. **The Periodical Essay** is connected with the names of JOSEPH ADDISON and SIR RICHARD STEELE. This gay, light, and graceful kind of literature, differing from such Essays as Bacon's as good conversation

about a subject differs from a clear analysis of all its points, was begun in France by Montaigne in 1580. Charles Cotton, a wit of Charles II.'s time, re-translated Montaigne's *Essays*, and they soon found imitators in Cowley, and Sir W. Temple. But the periodical Essay was created by Steele and Addison. It was published three times a week, then daily, and it was anonymous, and both these characters necessarily changed its form from that of an Essay of Montaigne. Steele began it in the *Tatler*, 1709, and it treated of everything that was going on in the world. He paints as a social humourist the whole age of Queen Anne—the political and literary disputes, the fine gentlemen and ladies, the characters of men, the humours of society, the new book, the new play; we live in the very streets and drawing-rooms of old London. Addison soon joined him, first in the *Tatler*, afterwards in the *Spectator*, 1711. His work is more critical, literary, and didactic than his companion's. The characters he introduces, such as Roger de Coverley, are finished studies after nature, and their talk is easy and dramatic. No humour is more fine and tender; and, like Chaucer's, it is never bitter. The style adds to the charm: in its varied cadence and subtle ease it has never been surpassed; and it seems to grow out of the subjects treated of. Addison's work was a great one, lightly done. The *Spectator*, the *Guardian*, and the *Freeholder*, in his hands, gave a better tone to manners, and a gentler one to political and literary criticism. The essays published every Friday were chiefly on literary subjects, the Saturday essays chiefly on religious subjects. The former popularized literature, so that culture spread among the middle classes and crept down to the country; the latter popularized religion. "I have brought," he says, "philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses.'

The next important series was Johnson's *Rambler* (1750-2) and *Idler*, but in them lightness, the essence of this kind of Essay, was lost. Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, a series of letters supposed to be written by a Chinese traveller in England, and collected in 1762, satirizes the manners and fashionable follies of the time. Several other series followed but they are now unreadable. One man alone in our own century caught the old inspiration, and with a humour less easy, as gentle, but more subtle than Addison's. It was Charles Lamb, in the *Essays of Elia*, and the fineness of perception he showed in these was equally displayed in his criticisms on the old dramatists.

122. **The Drama.**—During this time the Drama continued. Jeremy Collier's famous attack on the stage (1698) may have had some influence in purifying it, but it was really the growth of a higher tone of society which improved it. It grew dull in the stupid plays of Steele, in Addison's ponderous tragedy of *Cato* (1713), and in the melancholy tragedies of Rowe (1700-13), whose name is, however, to be remembered as the first editor of Shakespeare, 1709-10. The four folio editions of Shakespeare had been previously set forth in 1623, 1632, 1664, and 1685. *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) of Gay introduced a new form of dramatic literature, and Colley Cibber carried on the lighter comedy into the reign of George II. Fielding then made the stage the vehicle of criticism on the follies, literature, and politics of the time, and the actors Foote and Garrick did the same in their farces. Tragedy now trod the boards with the heavy foot of Johnson in his *Irene* (1749), and Home's *Douglas* kept the stage. A number of sentimental comedies written by Macklin, Murphy, Cumberland and the Colmans still survive, but the classic comedy can only be said to be represented by *The Goodnatured Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer* of Goldsmith, by *The Rivals* and the *School for*

Scandal of Sheridan, all of which appeared between 1768 and 1778. Both were Irishmen, but Goldsmith has more of the Celtic grace, and Sheridan of the Celtic wit. With Sheridan we may say that the history of the English drama closes.

CHAPTER VII.

PROSE LITERATURE FROM GEORGE III. TO VICTORIA.

1760—1837.

Richardson's *Pamela*, **1740**.—Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, **1742**.—Smollett's *Roderick Random* and Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*, **1748**.—Fielding's *Tom Jones*, **1749**.—Johnson's *Dictionary*, **1755**.—Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, **1759**.—Hume's *History of England*, completed **1761**.—Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, **1766**.—Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, **1776**.—Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, completed **1788**.—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, **1791**.—Burke's *Writings*, from **1756-1797**.—Miss Austin's *Novels*, **1811-1817**.—Scott's *Novels*, **1814-1831**.

123. **Prose Literature.**—The rapid increase of manufactures, science, and prosperity which began with the middle of the eighteenth century is paralleled by the growth of Literature. The general causes of this growth were—

1st, That **a good prose style had been perfected**, and the method of writing being made easy, production increased. Men were born, as it were, into a good school of the art of composition, and the boy of eighteen had no difficulty in making sentences which the Elizabethan writer could not have put together after fifty years of study.

2ndly, The **long peace** after the accession of the House of Hanover had left England at rest, and given it wealth. The reclaiming of waste tracts, the

increased wealth and trade, made better communication necessary; and the country was soon covered with a network of highways. The leisure gave time to men to think and write: the quicker interchange between the capital and the country spread over England the literature of the capital, and stirred men everywhere to write. The coaching services, and the post carried the new book and the literary criticism to the villages, and awoke the men of genius there, who might otherwise have been silent.

3rdly, **The Press** sent far and wide the news of the day, and grew in importance till it contained the opinions and writings of men like Canning. Such seed produced literary work in the country. *Newspapers* now began to play their part in literature. They rose under the Commonwealth, but became important when the censorship which reduced them to a mere broadsheet of news was removed after the Revolution of 1688. The political sleep of the age of the two first Georges hindered their progress; but in the reign of George III., after a struggle with which the name of John Wilkes and the author of the letters of Junius are connected, the Press claimed and obtained the right to criticize the conduct and measures of Ministers and Parliament and the King; and after the struggle in 1771 the right to publish and comment on the debates in the two Houses. The great English Journals, the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Post*, the *Herald*, and the *Times* gave an enormous impulse within the next twenty years to the production of books, and created a new class of literary men—the Journalists. Later on, in 1802, the publication of the *Edinburgh Review*, and afterwards of the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*, started another kind of prose writing, and by their criticisms on new books improved and stimulated literature.

4thly, **Communication with the Continent** had increased during the peaceable times of Walpole,

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and the wars that followed made it still easier. With its increase, two new and great outbursts of literature told upon England. France sent the works of Montesquieu, of Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, D'Alembert, and the rest of the liberal thinkers who were called the Encyclopædists, to influence and quicken English literature on all the great subjects that belong to the social and political life of man. Afterwards, the fresh German movement, led by Lessing and others, and carried on by Goethe and Schiller, added its impulse to the poetical school that arose in England along with the French Revolution. These were the general causes of the rapid growth of literature from the time of George III. We turn now to the forms Literature took—first in Prose, then in Poetry.

124. **The Novel** is perhaps the most remarkable. It began in the reign of George II. No books have ever produced so plentiful an offspring as the novels of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett. The novel arranges and combines round the passion of love and its course between two or more persons a number of events and of characters which in their action on one another develop the plot of the story and bring about a sad or a happy close. The story may be laid at any time, in any class of society, in any place. The whole world and the whole of human life lies before it as its subject. Its vast sphere accounts for its vast production—its human interest for its vast numbers of readers.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON, while Pope was yet alive, wrote in the form of letters, and in two months' time *Pamela* (1740), and afterwards *Clarissa Harlowe* (1748), and *Sir Charles Grandison*. The second is the best, and all are celebrated for their subtle and tender drawing of the human heart. They are novels of Sentiment; and their intense minuteness of detail gives them reality. Henry Fielding and Tobias Smollett followed him with the novel of Real life, full of events, adventures, fun, and vivid painting of various kinds of life in

England. FIELDING began with *Joseph Andrews* (1742), SMOLLETT with *Roderick Random* (1748). Both wrote many other stories, but in truth of representation of common life, and in the natural growth and winding up of the story, Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) is our English masterpiece and model. Ten years then sufficed to create an entirely new literature. LAURENCE STERNE, in his *Tristram Shandy*, (1759) introduced the novel of Character in which events are few. His peculiar vein of labyrinthine humour and falsetto sentiment has been imitated, but never attained. We mention Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759) as the first of our Didactic tales, and the *Fool of Quality*, by Henry Brooke, as the first of our Theological tales. Under George III. new forms of fiction appeared—GOLDSMITH'S *Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) was the first, and perhaps the most charming, of all those novels which we may call Idyllic, which describe the loves and the simple lives of country people in country scenery. MISS BURNEY'S *Evelina* (1778) and *Cecilia* were the first novels of Society. Mrs. Inchbald's *Simple Story* (1791) introduced the novel of Passion, and Mrs. Radcliffe, in her wild and picturesque tales, the Romantic novel. The interest kindled in political questions by the French Revolution showed itself in another class of novels, and the Political stories of Holcroft and William Godwin opened a new realm to the novelist, while the latter excluded love altogether from his story of *Caleb Williams*. Mrs. Opie made Domestic life the sphere of her graceful and pathetic stories (1806). MISS EDGEWORTH, in her Irish stories, gave the first impulse to the novel of National character, and in her other tales to the novel with a Moral purpose (1801-1811). MISS AUSTIN, with "an exquisite touch which renders commonplace things and characters interesting from truth of description and sentiment," produced the best stories we have of Everyday English society. *Sense and Sensibility*,

Pride and Prejudice, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Persuasion*, were all written between 1811 and 1817.

SIR WALTER SCOTT, the great Enchanter, now began the long series of his novels. Men are still alive who well remember the wonder and delight of the land when *Waverley* (1814) was published. In the rapidity of his work Scott recalls the Elizabethan time. *Guy Mannering*, his next tale, was written in six weeks. The *Bride of Lammermoor*, as great in fateful pathos as *Romeo and Juliet*, was done in a fortnight. His National tales, such as *The Heart of Midlothian*, and *The Antiquary*, are written as if he saw directly all the characters and scenes, and when he saw them enjoyed them so much that he could not help writing them down. And the art with which this was done was so inspired, that since Shakespeare there is nothing we can compare to it. "All is great in the Waverley Novels," says Goethe, "material, effects, characters, execution." In the vivid portraiture and dramatic story of such tales as *Kenilworth* and *Quentin Durward*, he created the Historical Novel. His last tale of power was the *Fair Maid of Perth* in 1828; his last effort in 1831 was made the year before he died. He raised the whole of the literature of the novel into one of the greatest influences that bear on the human mind. The words his uncle once said to him, may be applied to the work he did,—"God bless thee, Walter, my man! Thou hast risen to be great, but thou wast always good."

John Galt and Miss Ferrier followed him in describing Scottish life and society. With the peace of 1815 arose new forms of fiction, and travel, which became very popular when the close of the war with Napoleon opened the world again to Englishmen, gave birth to the tale of Foreign scenery and manners. Thomas Hope's *Anastasius* (1819) was the first. Lockhart began the Classical novel in *Valerius*. Fashionable

society was now painted by Theodore Hook, Mrs. Trollope, and Mrs. Gore; and Rural life by Miss Mitford in *Our Village*. Edward Bulwer Lytton began with the Fashionable novel in *Pelham* (1827), and followed it with a long succession of tales on historical, classical, and romantic subjects. Towards the close of his life, he changed his manner altogether, and *The Caxtons* and those that followed are novels of Modern Society. The tone of them all from the beginning to the end is too high-pitched for real life, but each of them being kept in the same key throughout has a reality of its own. CHARLOTTE BRONTË revived in *Jane Eyre* the novel of Passion, and Miss Yonge set on foot the Religious novel in support of a special school of theology. We need only mention Captain Marryatt, whose delightful sea stories carry on the seamen of Smollett to our own times. Miss Martineau and Mr. Disraeli carried on the novel of Political opinion and economy, and Charles Kingsley applied the novel to the social and theological problems of our own day. Three other great names are too close to us to admit of comment: Charles Dickens, William M. Thackeray, and the novelist who is known as George Eliot. It will be seen then that the Novel claims almost every sphere of human interest as its own, and it has this special character, that it is the only kind of literature in which women have done excellently.

125. **History**, to which we now turn, was raised into the rank of literature in the latter half of the eighteenth century by three men. DAVID HUME'S *History of England*, finished 1761, is, in the importance it gives to letters, in its clear narrative and style, and in the writer's endeavour to make it a philosophic whole, our first literary history. Of Dr. Robertson's *Histories of Scotland*, *of Charles V.*, and *of America*, the two last are literary by their descriptive and popular style, and show how our historical

interests were reaching beyond our own land. EDWARD GIBBON excelled the others in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, completed in 1788. The execution of his work was as accurate and exhaustive as a scientific treatise. Gibbon's conception of the whole subject was as poetical as a great picture. Rome, eastern and western, was painted in the centre, dying slowly like a lion. Around it he pictured all the nations and hordes that wrought its ruin, told their stories from the beginning, and the results on themselves and on the world of their victories over Rome. The collecting and use of every detail of the art and costume and manners of the times he described, the reading and use of all the contemporary literature, the careful geographical detail, the marshalling of all this information with his facts, the great imaginative conception of the work as a whole, and the use of a full and perhaps too heightened style to add importance to the subject, gave a new impulse and a new model to historical literature. The contemptuous tone of the book is made still more remarkable by the heavily-laden style, and the monotonous balance of every sentence. The bias Gibbon had against Christianity illustrates a common fault of historians. The historical value of Hume's history was spoiled by his personal dislike of the principles of our Revolution. W. Mitford's *History of Greece*, completed in 1810, is made untrue by his hatred of a democracy; and Dr. Lingard's excellent *History of England*, 1819, is influenced by his dislike of the Reformation. HENRY HALLAM was the first who wrote history in this country with so careful a love of truth, and with so accurate a judgment of the relative value of facts and things, that prejudice was excluded. His *Europe during the Middle Ages*, 1818, and his *Literature of Europe*, 1837-8, are distinguished for their exhaustive and judicial summing up of facts; and his *Constitutional History of England*, 1827, set

on foot a new kind of history in the best way. Our own history now engaged a number of writers. LORD MACAULAY'S great work told the story of the Revolution of 1688 in a style sometimes too emphatic, often monotonous from its mannerism, but always clear. Its vivid word-painting of characters and great events, and the splendid use in such descriptions of his vast knowledge of details, gave as great an impulse to the literature of history as Gibbon had done in his day, and his *Historical Essays* on the times and statesmen between the Restoration and Pitt are masterpieces of their kind.

Sir Francis Palgrave gave interest to the study of the early English period, and in our own day, a critical historical school has arisen, of which Mr. Freeman and Professor Stubbs are the leaders.

As the interest in the history of our own land increased, our interest in the history of the world increased. Dean Milman's *History of Latin Christianity* well deserves, by its brilliant and romantic style, the title of fine literature. Greece old and new found her best historians in Bishop Thirlwall, George Grote, and Mr. Finlay; Rome in Dr. Arnold. The history of events near at hand on the Continent was also taken up with care. Among the books of this class, I mention, for their special literary character and style, Sir William Napier's *History of the Peninsular War*, and Thomas Carlyle's *History of the French Revolution*. Both are written in too poetic prose, and the latter is a kind of epic, and full of his realistic, fantastic, and unequal power of representing persons and things. With him we close this account of historical literature, and return to the eighteenth century.

126. **Biography and Travel** are linked at many points to History. The first was lifted into a higher place in literature by Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, 1779-81, and by *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 1791. Since that time a multitude of biographies have poured from

the press, and have formed useful materials for history. Few of them have reached literary excellence. Southey's *Life of Nelson*, Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, Moore's *Life of Lord Byron;* or in our own days, Forster's *Life of Goldsmith*, and Dean Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, rise out of a crowd of inferior books.

The production of books of Travel since James Bruce left for Africa in 1762 till the present day has increased as rapidly almost as that of the Novel, and there is scarcely any part of the world that has not been visited and described. In this way a vast amount of materials has been collected for the use of philosophers, poets, and historians. Travel has rarely produced literature, but it has been one of its assistants.

127. **Theological Literature** received a new impulse in 1738-91 from the evangelising work of John Wesley and Whitfield; and their spiritual followers, John Scott, Newton, and Cecil made by their writings the Evangelical school. William Paley, in his *Evidences*, and Sydney Smith, well known as a wit and an essayist, defended Christianity from the common-sense point of view; while the sermons of Robert Hall and of Dr. Chalmers are, in different ways, fine examples of devotional and philosophical eloquence.

The decay of the Evangelical school was hastened by the writings of COLERIDGE, whose religious philosophy, in the *Aids to Reflection* and other books, created the school which has been called the Broad Church. Dr. Arnold's sermons supplied it with an element of masculine good sense. Frederick Maurice in his numerous works added to it mystical piety and one-sided learning, Charles Kingsley a rough and ready power, and Frederick Robertson gave it passion, sentiment, subtilty, and a fine form. At the same time that Maurice began to write (1830-32) the common-sense school of theology was continued by Archbishop Whately's works; and in strong reaction against the Evangelicals, the High Church party rose into

prominence in Oxford, and was chiefly supported by the tracts and sermons of John Henry Newman, whose work, with Keble's *Christian Year*, a collection of exqusitely wrought hymns, belongs to literature.

128. **Philosophical and Political Literature** were both stimulated by the great movement of thought on all subjects pertaining to the natural rights of man, which was led by Voltaire and Rousseau. In *philosophy* the historian David Hume (1738—1755) led the way, and the transparent clearness of his style gave full force to opinions which made utility the only measure of virtue, and the knowledge of our ignorance the only certain knowledge. An eloquent school of Scotch metaphysicians came after him, and for the most part opposed the ideal system on which Hume had founded his famous argument on causation. Dr. Reid, Dr. Stewart, and Dr. Brown carry this school on to 1820. The Utilitarian view of morals was put forth with great power by Jeremy Bentham, and in our own day by John Stuart Mill, whose name, with Sir W. Hamilton's and Professor Whewell's, belongs to the literature of philosophy. The philosophy of Jurisprudence may be said to have been founded by JEREMY BENTHAM, and law was for the first time made a little clear to common minds by Blackstone's Commentaries.

129. **In political literature,** EDMUND BURKE is our greatest, almost our only, writer of this time. From 1756 to 1797, when he died, his treatises and speeches proved their right to the title of literature by their extraordinary influence on the country. Philosophical reasoning and poetic passion were wedded together in them on the side of conservatism, and every art of eloquence was used with the mastery that imagination gives. His *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*, 1773, was perhaps the best of his works in point of style. The *Reflections on the French Revolution*, 1790, and the *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 1796-7, were the most powerful. The first of these

two spread all over England a terror of the principles of the Revolution; the second increased the eagerness of England to carry on the war with France. All his work is more literature then oratory. Many of his speeches enthralled their hearers, but many more put them to sleep. The very men, however, who slept under him in the House read over and over again the same speech when published with renewed delight. Goldsmith's praise of him—that he "wound himself into his subject like a serpent"—gives the reason why he sometimes failed as an orator, why he always succeeded as a writer.

130. Before Burke, a new class of political writings had arisen which concerned themselves with **social and economical reform.** The immense increase of the industry, wealth, and commerce of the country from 1720 to 1770, aroused inquiry into the laws that regulate wealth, and ADAM SMITH, a professor at Glasgow, who had in 1759 written his book on the *Moral Sentiments*, published in 1776 the *Wealth of Nations*. By its theory, that labour is the source of wealth, and that to give the labourer absolute freedom to pursue his own interest in his own way is the best means of increasing the wealth of the country; by its proof that all laws made to restrain, or to shape, or to promote commerce, were stumbling-blocks in the way of the wealth of any state, he created the Science of Political Economy, and started the theory and practice of Free Trade. All the questions of labour and capital were now placed on a scientific basis, and since that time the literature of the whole of the subject has engaged great thinkers. Connected with this were all the writings on the subjects of the *poor*, and *education*, and *reform*. The Methodist movement gave the first impulse to popular education, and stirred men to take interest in the cause of the poor. This new philanthropy, stirred still more by the theories of the French Revolution concerning the right of men to

freedom and equality, took up the subjects of slavery, of prison reform, of the emancipation of the Catholics, and of a wider representation of the people, and their literature fills a large space till 1832, when Reform brought forward new subjects, and the old subjects under new forms.

131. **Miscellaneous Literature.**—During the whole of this time, from the days of Johnson till 1832, the finer literature of prose had flourished. With SAMUEL JOHNSON began the literary man such as we know him in modern times, who, independent of patronage or party, lives by his pen, and finds in the public his only paymaster. His celebrated letter to Lord Chesterfield gave the death-blow to patronage. The great *Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755, at which he worked unhelped, and which he published without support, was the first book that appealed solely to the public. He represents thus a new class. But he was also the last representative of the literary king who, like Dryden and Pope, held a kind of court in London. When he died (1784) London was no longer the only literary centre, and poetry and prose were produced from all parts of the country.

The *miscellaneous literature of the latter half of the eighteenth century*, passing over Johnson and Goldsmith, whom we have already touched on, includes the admirable *Letters of Gray* the poet; Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry* which founded a new school of poetic criticism; the many collections of periodical essays all of which ceased in 1787; Burke's *Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful;* and the *Letters of Junius*, political invectives written in a style which has preserved them to this day.

The *miscellaneous literature of the early part of the nineteenth century* took mainly the form of long essays, most of which were originally published in the Reviews and Magazines. It was in *Blackwood's*

Magazine that Christopher North (Professor Wilson) published the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*—lively conversations that treated of all the topics of the day. It was in the *Edinburgh Review* that Macaulay and Sydney Smith and Jeffrey wrote essays on literature, politics, and philosophy. It was in *Fraser's Magazine* that THOMAS CARLYLE first came before the public with *Sartor Resartus* and the *Lectures on Heroes*, books which gave an entirely new impulse to the generation in which we live. Of all these miscellaneous writers, Carlyle was the most original, and Thomas De Quincey the greatest writer of English prose. DE QUINCEY'S style has so peculiar a quality that it stands alone. The sentences are built up like passages in a fugue, and there is nothing in English literature which can be compared in involved melody to the prose of the *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. One man alone in our own day is as great a master of English Prose, John Ruskin. He has created a new literature, that of art, and all the subjects related to it; and the work he has done has more genius and is more original than any other prose work of his time. Some of De Quincey's best work was done on the lives of the poets of his day; and indeed a great part of the miscellaneous literature consisted of *Criticism on poetry*, past and present. Coleridge, Charles Lamb, and Campbell carried on that study of the Elizabethan and earlier poetry which Warton had begun in the eighteenth century. Wordsworth wrote admirable prose on poetry, and the prose of his Essays just now published, especially of that *on the Convention of Cintra*, is quite stately. W. Hazlitt, W. S. Landor, Jeffrey, and a host of others added to the literature of criticism, and the ceaseless discussion of the works of the poets made them the foremost literary figures of the day. It is the work of the poets that we now take up, and in tracing it from the time of Pope to 1832 we shall complete this Primer.

CHAPTER VIII.

POETRY, FROM 1730 TO 1832.

Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*, **1725**.—Thomson's *Seasons*, **1730**.—Gray and Collins, *Poems*, **1746-1757**.—Goldsmith's *Traveller*, **1764**.—Chatterton's *Poems*, **1770**.—Blake's *Poems*, **1777-1794**.—Crabbe's *Village*, **1783**.—Cowper's *Task*, **1785**.—Burns's *first Poems*, **1786**.—Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*, **1799**.—Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*, **1798**; his *Prelude*, **1806**; *Excursion*, **1814**.—Coleridge's *Christabel*, **1805**.—Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, *Lady of the Lake*, **1805-8-10**.—Byron's *Poems*, **1807-1823**.—Shelley's *Poems*, **1813-1821**.—Keats' *Poems*, **1817-1820**.—Tennyson's *first Poems*, **1830**.

132. The Elements and Forms of the New Poetry.—The poetry we are now to study may be divided into *two periods*. The first dates from about the middle of Pope's life, and closes with the publication of Cowper's *Task*, 1785; the second begins with the *Task* and closes in 1832. The first is not wrongly called a time of transition. The influence of the poetry of the past lasted; new elements were added to poetry, and new forms of it took shape. There was a change also in the style and in the subject of poetry. Under these heads I shall bring together the various poetical works of this period.

(1.) *The influence of the didactic and satirical poetry of the critical school lingered* among the new elements which I shall notice. It is found in Johnson's two satires on the manners of his time, the *London*, 1738, and the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, 1749; in Robert Blair's dull poem of *The Grave*, 1743; in Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, 1743, a poem on the immortality of the soul, and in his satires on *The Universal Passion of Fame;* in the tame work of Richard Savage, Johnson's poor friend; and

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in the short-lived but vigorous satires of Charles Churchill, who died in 1764, twenty years after Savage. The *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 1744, by Mark Akenside, belongs also in spirit to the time of Queen Anne, and was suggested by Addison's essays in the *Spectator* on imagination.

(2.) *The study of the Greek and Latin classics revived*, and with it a more artistic poetry. Not only correct form, for which Pope sought, but beautiful form also was sought after. Men like THOMAS GRAY and WILLIAM COLLINS strove to pour into their work that simplicity of beauty which the Greek poets and Italians like Petrarca had reached as the last result of genius restrained by art. Their poems, published between 1746 and 1757, are exquisite examples of perfectly English work wrought in the spirit of classic art. They remain apart as a unique type of poetry. The refined workmanship of these poets, their manner of blending together natural feeling and natural scenery, their studious care in the choice of words are worthy of special study.

(3.) *The study of the Elizabethan and the earlier poets like Chaucer, and of the whole course of poetry in England, was taken up with great interest.* Shakespeare and Chaucer had engaged both Dryden and Pope; but the whole subject was now enlarged. Gray like Pope projected a history of English poetry, and his *Ode on the Progress of Poesy* illustrates this new interest. Thomas Warton wrote his *History of English Poetry*, 1774-78, and in doing so gave fresh material to the poets. They began to take delight in the childlikeness and naturalness of Chaucer as distinguished from the artificial and critical verse of the school of Pope. Shakespeare was studied in a more accurate way. Pope's, Theobald's, Sir Thomas Hanmer's, and Warburton's editions of Shakespeare were succeeded by Johnson's in 1765; and Garrick the actor

began the restoration of the genuine text of Shakespeare's plays for the stage.

Spenser formed the spirit and work of some poets, and T. Warton wrote an essay on the *Faerie Queen*. William Shenstone's *Schoolmistress*, 1742, was one of these Spenserian poems, and so was the *Castle of Indolence*, 1748, by James Thomson author of the *Seasons*. James Beattie, in the *Minstrel*, 1774, a didactic poem, followed the stanza and manner of Spenser.

(4.) A new element—*interest in the romantic past*—was added by the publication of Dr. Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 1765. The narrative ballad and the narrative romance, afterwards taken up and perfected by Sir Walter Scott, now struck their roots afresh in English poetry. Men began to seek among the ruder times of history for wild, natural stories of human life; and the pleasure in these increased and accompanied the growing love of lonely, even of savage scenery. The *Ossian*, 1762, of James Macpherson, which gave itself out as a translation of Gaelic epic poems, is an example of this new element. Still more remarkable in this way were the poems of THOMAS CHATTERTON, the 'marvellous boy,' who died by his own hand in 1770, at the age of seventeen. They were imitations of old poetry. He pretended to have discovered in a muniment room at Bristol, the *Death of Sir Charles Bawdin* and other poems by an imaginary monk named Thomas Rowley. Written with the old spelling, and with a great deal of lyrical invention, they raised around them a great controversy. I may mention as an instance of the same tendency, even before the *Reliques*, Gray's translations from the Norse and British poetry and his poem of the *Bard*, in which the bards of Wales are celebrated.

133. **Change of Style.**—We have seen how the natural style of the Elizabethan poets had ended by

producing an unnatural style. In reaction from this the critical poets set aside natural feeling as having nothing to do with the expression of thought in verse, and wrote according to rules of art which they had painfully worked out. Their style in doing this lost life and fire; and losing these, lost art which has its roots in emotion, and gained artifice which has its roots in intellectual analysis. Being unwarmed by any natural feeling it became as unnatural, considered as a poetic style, as that of the later Elizabethan poets. We may sum up then the whole history of the style of poetry from Elizabeth to George I.—the style of the first-rate poets being excepted—in these words: *Nature without Art, and Art without Nature, had reached similar but not identical results in style.* But in the process two things had been learned. First, that artistic rules were necessary and secondly, that natural feeling was necessary, in order that poetry should have a style fitted to express nobly the emotions and thoughts of man. The way was therefore now made ready for a style in which the Art should itself be Nature, and it sprang at once into being in the work of the poets of this time. The style of Gray and Collins is polished to the finest point, and yet is instinct with natural feeling. Goldsmith is natural even to simplicity, and yet his verse is even more accurate than Pope's. Cowper's style, in such poems as the *Lines to his Mother's Picture*, and in lyrics like the *Loss of the Royal George*, arises out of the simplest pathos, and yet is as pure in expression as Greek poetry. The work was then done; but as yet the element of fervent passion did not enter into poetic style. We shall see how that came in after 1789.

134. **Change of Subject.—Nature.**—We have said at the beginning of this Primer that poets worked on two great subjects,—Man and Nature. Up to the age of Pope the subject of Man was alone treated, and we

have seen how many phases it went through. There remained the subject of Nature and of man's relation to it; that is, of the visible landscape, sea and sky and all that men feel in contact with them. Natural scenery had been hitherto only used as a background to the picture of human life. It now began to take a much larger place in poetry and after a time grew to occupy a distinct place of its own apart from Man. It is the growth of this new subject which will engage us now.

135. **The Poetry of Natural Description.**—We have found already traces in the poets of a pleasure in rural things and the emotions they awakened. This appears chiefly among the Puritans, who because they hated the politics of the Stuarts before the civil war and the corruption of the court after it, lived apart from the town in quietude. The best natural description we have before the time of Pope is that of two Puritans, Marvel and Milton. But the first poem devoted to natural description appeared while Pope was yet alive in the very midst of a vigorous town poetry. It was the *Seasons*, 1726-30; and it is curious, remembering what I have said about the peculiar turn of the Scotch for natural description, that it was the work of JAMES THOMSON, a Scotchman. It described the scenery and country life of Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. He wrote with his eye upon their scenery, and even when he wrote of it in his room, it was with "a recollected love." The descriptions were too much like catalogues, the very fault of the previous Scotch poets, and his style was always heavy and often cold, but he was the first poet who led the English people into that new world of nature in poetry, which has moved and enchanted us in the work of Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and Tennyson, but which was entirely impossible for Pope to understand. The impulse he gave was soon followed. Men left the town to visit the country and record their

feelings. William Somerville's *Chase*, 1735, and John Dyer's *Grongar Hill*, 1726, a description of a journey in South Wales, and his *Fleece*, 1757, are full of country sights and scenes: even Akenside mingled his spurious philosophy with pictures of solitary natural scenery.

Foreign travel now enlarged the love of nature. Gray's letters, some of the best in the English language, describe natural scenery with a minuteness quite new in English Literature. In his poetry he used the description of nature as "its most graceful ornament," but never made it the subject. In the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, and in the *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, natural scenery is interwoven with reflections on human life, and used to point its moral. Collins observes the same method in his *Ode on the Passions* and the *Ode to Evening*. There is then as yet no love of nature for its own sake. A further step was made by OLIVER GOLDSMITH in his *Traveller*, 1764, a sketch of national manners and governments, and in his *Deserted Village*, 1770. He describes natural scenery with less emotion than Collins, and does not moralize it like Gray. The scenes he paints are pure pictures, and he has no personal interest in them. The next step was made by men like the two Wartons and by John Logan, 1782. Their poems do not speak of nature and human life, but of nature and themselves. They see the reflection of their own joys and sorrows in the woods and streams, and for the first time the pleasure of being alone with nature apart from men became a distinct element in modern poetry. In the later poets it becomes one of their main subjects. These were the steps towards that love of nature for its own sake which we shall find in the poets who followed Cowper. One poem of the time almost anticipates it. It is the *Minstrel*, 1771, of THOMAS BEATTIE. This poem represents a young poet educated almost altogether by lonely communion with and love of nature, and both in the spirit and treatment of the first part of

the story resembles very closely Wordsworth's description of his own education by nature in the beginning of the *Prelude*, and the history of the pedler in the first book of the *Excursion*.

136. **Further Change of Subject.—Man.**—During this time the interest in Mankind, that is, in Man independent of nation, class and caste, which we have seen in prose, and which was stimulated by the works of Voltaire and Rousseau, began to influence poetry. It broke out into a fierce extreme in the French Revolution, but long before that event it entered into poetry in various ways as it had entered into society and politics. One form of it appeared in the interest the poets began to take in men of other nations than England; another form of it—and this was increased by the Methodist revival—was the interest in the lives of the poor. Thomson speaks with sympathy of the Siberian exile and the Mecca pilgrim, and the *Traveller* of Goldsmith enters into foreign interests. His *Deserted Village*, Shenstone's *Schoolmistress*, Gray's *Elegy* celebrate the annals of the poor. Michael Bruce in his *Lochleven* praises the "secret primrose path of rural life," and Dr. John Langhorne in his *Country Justice* pleads the cause of the poor and paints their sorrows. Connected with this new element is the simple ballad of simple love, such as Shenstone's *Jemmy Dawson*, Mickle's *Mariner's Wife*, Goldsmith's *Edwin and Angelina*, poems which started a new type of human poetry, afterwards worked out more completely in the *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth. In a class apart I call attention to the *Song of David*, a long poem written by Christopher Smart, a friend of Johnson's. It will be found in Chambers' "Cyclopædia of English Literature." Composed for the most part in a madhouse, the song has a touch here and there of the overforcefulness and the lapsing thoughts of a half insane brain. But its power of metre and of imaginative presentation of thoughts and

things, and its mingling of sweet and grand religious poetry ought to make it better known. It is unique in style and in character.

137. **Scottish Poetry** illustrates and anticipates the poetry of the poor and the ballad. We have not mentioned it since Sir David Lyndsay, for with the exception of stray songs its voice was silent for a century and a half. It revived in ALLAN RAMSAY, a friend of Pope and Gay. His light pieces of rustic humour were followed by the *Tea Table Miscellany* and the *Ever-Green*, collections of existing Scottish songs mixed up with some of his own. They carried on the song of rural life and love and humour which Burns perfected. Ramsay's pastoral drama of the *Gentle Shepherd*, 1725, is a pure, tender and genuine picture of Scottish life and love among the poor and in the country. ROBERT FERGUSON deserves to be named because he kindled the muse of Burns, and his occasional pieces, 1773, are chiefly, concerned with the rude and humourous life of Edinburgh. The Ballad, always continuous in Scotland, took a more modern but very pathetic form in such productions as *Auld Robin Gray* and the *Flowers of the Forest*, a mourning for those who fell at Flodden Field. The peculiarities I have dwelt on already continue in this revival. There is the same nationality, the same rough wit, the same love of nature, but the love of colour has lessened. With ROBERT BURNS poetry written in the Scotch dialect may be said to say its last word of genius, though it lingered on in JAMES HOGG's lovely poem of *Kilmeny* in *The Queen's Wake*, 1813, and continues a song-making existence to the present day.

138. **The Second Period of the New Poetry.**—The new elements and the changes on which I have dwelt are expressed by three poets—Cowper, Crabbe and Burns. But before these we must mention the poems of WILLIAM BLAKE, the artist, and for three reasons. (1.) They represent the new elements. *The*

Poetical Sketches, written in 1777, illustrate the new study of the Elizabethan poets. Blake imitated Spenser, and in his short fragment of *Edward III.* we hear again and again the note of Marlowe's violent imagination. A short poem *To the Muses* is a cry for the restoration to English poetry of the old poetic passion it had lost. In some ballad poems we trace the influence represented by Ossian and given by the publication of Percy's *Reliques*. (2.) We find also in his work certain elements which belonged to the second period of which I shall now speak. The love of animals is one. A great love of children and the poetry of home is another. He also anticipated in 1789 and 1794, when his *Songs of Innocence* and *Experience* were written, the simple natural poetry of ordinary life which Wordsworth perfected in the Lyrical Ballads, 1798. Further still, we find in these poems traces of the democratic element, of the hatred of priestcraft, and of the war with social wrongs which came much later into English poetry. We even find traces of the mysticism and the search after the problem of life that fill so much of our poetry after 1832. (3.) But that which is most special in Blake is his extraordinary reproduction of the spirit, tone and ring of the Elizabethan songs, of the inimitable innocence and fearlessness which belongs to the childhood of a new literature. The little poems too in the *Songs of Innocence*, on infancy and first motherhood, and on subjects like the *Lamb*, are without rival in our language for ideal simplicity and a perfection of singing joy. The *Songs of Experience* give the reverse side of the *Songs of Innocence*, and they see the evil of the world as a child in a man's heart would see it—with exaggerated and ghastly horror. Blake stands alone in our poetry, and his work coming where it did, between 1777 and 1794, makes it the more remarkable. We turn now to WILLIAM COWPER who represents fully and more widely than either Crabbe

or Burns the new elements on which I have dwelt.

139. **William Cowper's** first poems were the *Olney Hymns*, 1779, written along with John Newton, and in these the religious poetry of Charles Wesley was continued. The profound personal religion, gloomy even to insanity as it often became, which fills the whole of Cowper's poetry, introduced a theological element into English poetry which continually increased till within the last ten years, when it has gradually ceased. His didactic and satirical poems in 1782 link him backwards to the last age. His translation of Homer, 1791, and of shorter pieces from the Latin and Greek, connects him with the classical influence, his interest in Milton with the revived study of the English Poets. The delightful and gentle vein of humour which he showed in *John Gilpin* and other poems reminds us of Addison, and opened a new form of verse to poets. With this kind of humour is connected a simple pathos of which Cowper is our greatest master. The *Lines to Mary Unwin* and to his *Mother's Picture* prove, with the work of Blake, that pure natural feeling wholly free from artifice had returned to English song. A wholly new element was also introduced by him and Blake—the love of animals and the poetry of their relation to man, a vein plentifully worked by after poets. His greatest work was the *Task*, 1785. It is mainly a description of himself and his life in the country, his home, his friends, his thoughts as he walks, the quiet landscape of Olney, the life of the poor people about him, mixed up with disquisitions on political and social subjects, and at the end, a prophecy of the victory of the Kingdom of God. *The change in it in relation to the subject of Nature is very great.* Cowper is the first of the poets who loves Nature entirely for her own sake. He paints only what he sees, but he paints it with the affection of a child

for a flower and with the minute observation of a man. *The change in relation to the subject of Man is equally great.* The idea of *Mankind as a whole* which we have seen growing up is fully formed in Cowper's mind. The range of his interests is as wide as the world, and all men form one brotherhood. All the social questions of Education, Prisons, Hospitals, city and country life, the state of the poor and their sorrows, the question of universal freedom and of slavery, of human wrong and oppression, of just and free government, of international intercourse and union, and above all the entirely new question of the future destiny of the whole race, as a whole, are introduced by Cowper into English poetry. It is a wonderful change; a change so wonderful that it is like a new world. It is in fact the concentration into one retired poet's work of all the new thought on the subject of mankind which was soon to take so fierce a form in Paris. And though splendour and passion were added by the poets who succeeded him to the new poetry, yet they worked on the thoughts he had laid down, and he is their leader.

140. **George Crabbe** took up the side of the poetry of Man which had to do with the lives of the poor in the *Village*, 1783, and in the *Parish Register*, 1807. In the short tales related in these books we are brought face to face with the sternest pictures of humble life, its sacrifices, temptations, righteousness, love, and crimes. The prison, the workhouse, the hospital and the miserable cottage are all sketched with a truthfulness perhaps too unrelenting, and the effect of this poetry in widening human sympathies was very great. The *Borough* and *Tales in Verse* followed, and finally the *Tales of the Hall* in 1819. His work wanted the humour of Cowper, and though often pathetic, and always forcible, was too forcible for pure pathos. His work on Nature is as minute and accurate, but as limited in range of excellence as his work on Man. I may

mention here in connection with the poetry of the poor, the work of ROBERT BLOOMFIELD, himself a poor shoemaker. The *Farmer's Boy*, 1798, and the *Rural Tales*, are poems as cheerful as Crabbe's were stern, and his descriptions of rural life are brighter and not less faithful. The kind of poetry thus started long continued in our verse. Wordsworth took it up and added to it new features, and Thomas Hood in short pieces like the *Song of the Shirt* gave it a direct bearing on social evils.

141. One element, the element of the passion of love, had been on the whole absent from our poetry since the Restoration. It was restored by **Robert Burns.** In his love songs we hear again, only with greater truth of natural feeling, the same music which in the age of Elizabeth enchanted the world. It was as a love-poet that he began to write, and the first edition of his poems appeared in 1786. But he was not only the poet of love, but also of the new excitement about Man. Himself poor, he sang the poor. Neither poverty nor low birth made a man the worse—the man was "a man for a' that." He did the same work in Scotland in 1786 which Crabbe began in England in 1783 and Cowper in 1785, and it is worth remarking how the dates run together. As in Cowper, so also in Burns, the further widening of human sympathies is shown in the new tenderness for animals. The birds, sheep, cattle and wild creatures of the wood and field fill as large a space in the poetry of Burns as in that of Wordsworth and Coleridge. He carried on also the Celtic elements of Scotch poetry, but he mingled them with others specially English. The rattling fun of the *Jolly Beggars* and of *Tam o'Shanter* is united to a life-like painting of human character which is peculiarly English. A certain large gentleness of feeling often made his wit into that true humour which is more English than Celtic, and the passionate pathos of such

poems as *Mary in Heaven* is connected with this vein of humour, and is also more English than Scotch. The special nationality of Scotch poetry is stronger in Burns than in any of his predecessors, but it is also mingled with a larger view of man than the merely national one. Nor did he fail to carry on the Scotch love of nature, though he shows the English influence in using natural description not for the love of nature alone, but as a background for human love. It was the strength of his passions and the weakness of his moral will which made his poetry and spoilt his life. Of the three men he had most genius, but the poetical motives he supplied us with are fewer than those supplied by Cowper.

142. **The French Revolution and the Poets.** —Certain ideas relating to Mankind considered as a whole had been growing up in Europe for more than a century, and we have seen their influence on the work of Cowper, Crabbe, and Burns. These ideas spoke of natural rights that belonged to every man and which united all men to one another. All men were by right equal, and free, and brothers. There was therefore only one class, the class of Man; only one nation, the nation of Man, of which all were equal citizens. All the old divisions therefore which wealth and rank and class and caste and national boundaries had made were put aside as wrong and useless. Such ideas had been for a long time expressed by France in her literature. They were now waiting to be expressed in action and in the overthrow of the Bastille in 1789, and in the proclamation of the new Constitution in the following year France threw them abruptly into popular and political form. Immediately they became living powers in the world, and it is round the excitement they kindled in England that the work of the poets from 1790 to 1830 can best be grouped. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey accepted them with joy but receded from them when they ended in the

violence of the Reign of Terror and in the imperialism of Napoleon. Scott hated them, and in disgust at the present turned to write of the romantic past. Byron did not express them themselves, but he expressed the whole of the revolutionary spirit in its action against old social opinions. Shelley took them up after the reaction against them had begun to die away, and re-expressed them. Two men, Rogers and Keats, were wholly untouched by them. One special thing they did for poetry. They brought back, by the powerful feelings they kindled in men, passion into its style, into all its work about Man, and through that, into its work about Nature.

143. ROBERT SOUTHEY began his poetical life with the revolutionary poem of *Wat Tyler*, 1794; and between 1802 and 1814 wrote *Thalaba*, *Madoc*, *The Curse of Kehama*, and *Roderick the Last of the Goths*. His *Vision of Judgment*, written on the death of George III., and ridiculed by Byron in another *Vision*, proves him to have become a Tory of Tories. SAMUEL T. COLERIDGE could not turn round so completely, but the wild enthusiasm of his early poems was lessened when in 1796 he wrote the *Ode to the Departing Year* and the *Ode to France*, poems which nearly reach sublimity. When France, however, ceasing to be the champion of freedom, attacked Switzerland, Coleridge as well as Wordsworth ceased to believe in her and fell back on the old English ideas of patriotism and of tranquil freedom. Still the disappointment was bitter, and the *Ode to Dejection* is instinct not only with his own wasted life, but with the sorrow of one who has had golden ideals and found them turn in his hands to clay. His best work is but little, but of its kind it is perfect and unique. For exquisite music of metrical movement and for an imaginative phantasy, such as might belong to a world where men always dreamt, there is nothing in our language to be compared with *Christabel*, 1805, and

Kubla Khan, and to the *Ancient Mariner* published as one of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. The little poem called *Love* is not so good, but it touches with great grace that with which all sympathise. All that he did excellently might be bound up in twenty pages, but it should be bound in pure gold.

144. Of all the poets, misnamed Lake Poets, **William Wordsworth** was the greatest. Born in 1770, educated on the banks of Esthwaithe, he loved the scenery of the Lakes as a boy, lived among it in his manhood, and died in 1850, where Rydal and Grasmere Water meet. He took his degree in 1791 at Cambridge. The year before he had made a short tour on the Continent and stepped on the French shore at the very time when the whole land was "mad with joy." The end of 1791 saw him again in France and living at Orleans. He threw himself eagerly into the Revolution, joined the "patriot side," and came to Paris just after the September massacre of 1792. Narrowly escaping the fate of his friends the Brissotins, he got home to England before the execution of Louis XVI. in 1793, and published his *Descriptive Sketches*. His sympathy with the French continued, and he took their side against his own country, hating the war that England now set on foot against France. He was poor, but his friend Raisley Calvert left him 900*l.* and enabled him to live the simple life he had now chosen, the life of a retired poet. At first we find him at Racedown, where in 1797 he made friendship with Coleridge, and then at Alfoxden, in Somerset, where he and Coleridge planned and published in 1798 the *Lyrical Ballads*. After a winter in Germany with Coleridge, where the *Prelude* was begun, he took a small cottage at Grasmere, and there in 1805-6 finished the *Prelude*, not published till 1850. Another set of the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared in 1807, and in 1814 his philosophical poem the *Excursion*. From that time till his

death he produced from his home at Rydal Mount a great succession of poems.

145. **Wordsworth and Nature.**—The *Prelude* is the history of Wordsworth's poetical growth from a child till 1806. It reveals him as the poet of Nature and of Man. His view of Nature was entirely different from that which up to his time the poets had held. They had believed that the visible universe was dead matter set in motion like a machine and regulated by fixed laws. Wordsworth, on the contrary, said that it was alive. There is a soul, he said, in all the worlds; "an active principle subsists" in Nature, and entering into all things, gives to each of them a distinct life of their own. But the life which varied itself in each thing was at the same time One Life. He gave this One Life personality, and he called it Nature, but in fact it was in his view the one living Spirit of God, who in ceaseless action made at each moment the outward universe. This soul of Nature was entirely distinct from the mind of man, and acted upon it. It had powers of its own, desires, feelings and thought of its own, and by these it gave education, impulses, comfort and joy to the man who opened his heart to receive them. The human mind receiving these impressions, reflected on them and added to them its own thoughts and feelings, and that union of the mind of man to the mind in Nature then took place which Wordsworth thought the true end of the pre-arranged harmony he conceived between Nature and Humanity. This is the idea which runs through all his poetry, and one thing especially followed from it, that he was the first who loved Nature with a personal love. He could do that because he did not mix up Nature with his own mind, nor make her the reflection of himself, nor look upon her as dead matter. She was a person to him, distinct from himself, and therefore capable of being loved as a man loves a woman. He could brood on her character, her ways,

her words, her life, as he did on those of his wife or sister. Hence arose his minute and loving observation of her and his passionate description of all her forms. There was nothing, from the daisy's "star-shaped shadow on the naked stone" to the vast landscape seen at sunrise from the mountain top, that he did not describe, that he has not made us love.

146. **Wordsworth and Man.**—We have seen the vivid interest that Wordsworth took in the new ideas about man as they were shown in the French Revolution. But even before that he relates in the *Prelude* how he had been led through his love of Nature to honour Man. The shepherds of the Lake hills, the dalesmen, had been seen by him as part of the wild scenery in which he lived, and he mixed up their life with the grandeur of Nature and came to honour them as part of her being. The love of Nature led him to the love of Man. It was exactly the reverse order to that of the previous poets. At Cambridge, and afterwards in the crowd of London and in his first tour on the Continent, he received new impressions of the vast world of Man, but Nature still remained the first. It was only during his life in France and in the excitement of the new theories and their activity that he was swept away from Nature and found himself thinking of Man as distinct from her, and first in importance. But the hopes he had formed from the Revolution broke down. All his dreams about a new life of man were made vile when France gave up liberty for Napoleon; and he was left without love of Nature or care for Man. It was then that his sister Dorothy, herself worthy of mention in a history of literature, led him back to his early love of Nature and restored his mind. Living quietly at Grasmere, he sought in the simple lives of the dalesmen round him for the foundations of a truer view of mankind than the theories of the Revolution afforded. And in thinking

and writing of the common duties and faith, kindnesses and truth of lowly men, he found in Man once more

> "an object of delight,
> Of pure imagination and of love."

With that he recovered also his interest in the larger movements of mankind. His love of liberty and hatred of oppression revived. He saw in Napoleon the enemy of man. A whole series of sonnets followed the events on the Continent. One recorded his horror at the attack on the Swiss, another mourned the fate of Venice, another the fate of Toussaint the negro chief; others celebrated the struggle of Hofer and the Tyrolese, others the struggle of Spain. Two thanksgiving odes rejoiced in the overthrow of the oppressor at Waterloo. He became conservative in his old age, but his interest in social and national movements did not decay. He wrote on Education, the Poor Laws, and other subjects. When almost seventy he took the side of the Carbonari, and sympathised with the Italian struggle. He was truly a poet of Mankind. But his chief work was done in his own country and among his own folk; and he was the first who threw around the lives of homely men and women the glory and sweetness of song, and taught us to know the brotherhood of all men in a more beautiful way than the wild way of the Revolution. He lies asleep now among the people he loved, in the green churchyard of Grasmere, by the side of the stream of Rothay, in a place as quiet as his life. Few spots on earth are more sacred than his grave.

147. **Criticism** must needs confess that much of his work is prosaic in thought, but the form of it is always poetic; that is, the thoughts are expressed in a way prose never would express them. His theory about poetic diction, that it should be the ordinary language men use in strong emotion, may seem to contradict this; but as Coleridge has shown, Wordsworth did not

practise his theory, and where he did the result was not poetry. His style in blank verse is the likest to Milton that we possess, but it is more feminine than Milton's. He is like Milton also in this, that he excelled in the Sonnet, which we may say he restored to modern poetry. Along with the rest of all the poets of the time he revived old measures and invented new. His philosophy of Nature we have explained: his human philosophy, of which the *Excursion* is the best example, was no deeper than a lofty and grave morality created, in union with an imaginative Christianity. He believed in himself when all the world disbelieved in him, and he has been proved right and the world wrong.

148. **Sir Walter Scott** was Wordsworth's dear friend, and his career as a poet began when Wordsworth first came to Grasmere, with the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, 1805. *Marmion* followed in 1808, and the *Lady of the Lake* in 1810. These were his best poems; the others, with the exception of some lyrics which touch the sadness and brightness of life with equal power, do not count in our estimate of him. He perfected the narrative poem. In *Marmion* and the *Lady of the Lake* his wonderful inventiveness in narration is at its height, and it is matched by the vividness of his natural description. No poet, and in this he carries on the old Scotch quality, is a finer colourist. His landscapes are painted in colour, and the colour is always true. Nearly all his natural description is Scotch, and he was the first who opened to the delight of the world the wild scenery of the Highlands and the Lowland moorland. He touched it all with a pencil so light, graceful, and true, that the very names are made romantic.

149. Scotland produced another poet in **Thomas Campbell.** His earliest poem the *Pleasures of Hope*, 1799, belonged in its formal rhythm and rhetoric, and in its artificial feeling for Nature, to the time of Thomson and Gray rather than to the newer time. His later

poems, such as *Gertrude of Wyoming* and *O'Connor's Child*, were far more natural, but they lost the superb rhetoric so remarkable in the *Pleasures of Hope*. Campbell will chiefly live by his lyrics. *Hohenlinden*, the *Battle of the Baltic*, the *Mariners of England*, are splendid specimens of the war poetry of England; and the *Song to the Evening Star* and *Lord Ullin's Daughter* are full of tender feeling, and mark the influence of the more natural style that Wordsworth had brought to perfection.

150. **Rogers and Moore.**—Samuel Rogers is another poet whose work is apart from the great movement of the Revolution. In his long life of ninety years he produced two octavo volumes. The *Pleasures of Memory*, 1792, his first poem, links him to the past generation and has its characters. The later poems added to it in 1812, and the *Italy*, 1822, are the work of a slow and cultivated mind, and contain some laboured but fine descriptions. The curious thing is that, living apart in a courtly region of culture, there is not a trace in all his work that Europe and England and Society had passed during his life though a convulsion of change. To that convulsion the best work of THOMAS MOORE, an Irishman, may be referred. Ireland during Moore's youth endeavoured to exist under the dreadful and wicked weight of its Penal Code. The excitement of the French Revolution kindled the anger of Ireland into the rebellion of 1798, and Moore's genius, such as it was, into writing songs to the Irish airs collected in 1796. The best of these have for their hidden subject the struggle of Ireland against England. They went everywhere with him into society, and it is not too much to say that they helped by the interest they stirred to produce Catholic Emancipation. Moore's Oriental tales in *Lalla Rookh* are chiefly flash and glitter, but they are pleasant reading. He had a slight, pretty, rarely true, lyrical power,

and all the songs have this one excellence, they are truly things to be sung.

151. **The post-Revolution Poets.—Lord Byron.**—We turn to very different types of men when we come to Shelley and Keats, whom we may call post-Revolution poets. *Childe Harold*, cantos i. ii., Byron's first true poem, appeared in 1812, Shelley's *Queen Mab* in 1813, Keats's first volume in 1817. Of the three, LORD BYRON had the most of the quality we may call force. Born in 1788, his *Hours of Idleness*, a collection of short poems, in 1807, was mercilessly lashed in the *Edinburgh Review*. The attack only served to awaken his genius, and he replied with astonishing vigour in the satire of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* in 1809. Eastern travel gave birth to the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, to the *Giaour* and the *Bride of Abydos* in 1813, to the *Corsair* and *Lara* in 1814. The *Siege of Corinth*, *Parisina*, the *Prisoner of Chillon*, *Manfred*, and *Childe Harold* were finished before 1819. In 1818 he began a new style in *Beppo*, which he developed fully in the successive issues of *Don Juan*, 1819-1823. During this time a number of dramas came from him, partly historical, as his *Marino Faliero*, partly imaginative, as the *Cain*. His life had been wild and useless, but he died in trying to redeem it for the sake of the freedom of Greece. At Missolonghi he was seized with fever, and passed away in April 1824.

152. **The position of Byron as a poet** is a curious one. He is partly of the past and partly of the present. Something of the school of Pope clings to him; in *Childe Harold* he imitates Spenser, yet no one so completely broke away from old measures and old manners to make his poetry individual, not imitative. At first, he has no interest whatever in the human questions which were so strongly felt by Wordsworth and Shelley. His early work is chiefly narrative poetry written that he might talk of himself

and not of mankind. Nor has he any philosophy except that which centres round the problem of his own being. *Cain*, the most thoughtful of his productions, is in reality nothing more than the representation of the way in which the doctrines of original sin and final reprobation affected his own soul. We feel naturally great interest in this strong personality, put before us with such obstinate power, but it wearies at last. Finally it wearied himself. As he grew in thought, he escaped from his morbid self, and ran into the opposite extreme in *Don Juan*. It is chiefly in it that he shows the influence of the revolutionary spirit. It is written in bold revolt against all the conventionality of social morality and religion and politics. It claimed for himself and for others absolute freedom of individual act and thought in opposition to that force of society which tends to make all men after one pattern. This was the best result of his work, though the way in which it was done can scarcely be approved. He escaped still more from his diseased self when, fully seized on by the new spirit of setting men free from oppression, he sacrificed his life for the deliverance of Greece.

As *the poet of Nature* he belongs also to the old and the new school. We have mentioned those poets before Cowper who had less a sympathy with Nature than a sympathy with themselves as they forced her to reflect them, men who followed the vein of Rousseau. Byron's poetry of natural description is often of this class. But he often escapes from this position of the 18th century poets, and with those of the 19th looks on Nature as she is, apart from himself; and this escape is made, as in the case of his poetry of Man, in his later poems. Lastly, it is his colossal power and the ease that comes from it, in which he resembles Dryden, that marks him specially. But it is always more power of the intellect than of the imagination.

153. **In Percy Bysshe Shelley**, on the contrary, the imagination is supreme and the intellect its servant. He produced while yet a boy some utterly worthless tales, but soon showed in *Queen Mab*, 1813, the influence of the revolutionary era, combined in him with a violent attack on the existing forms of religion. The poem is a poor one, but its poverty prophesies greatness. Its chief idea was the new one that had come into literature—the idea of the future perfection of mankind in a future golden age. The whole heart of Shelley was absorbed in this conception, in its faith, and in the hopes it stirred. To help the world towards it and to denounce and overthrow all that stood in its way was the object of half of Shelley's poetry. The other half was personal, an outpouring of himself in his seeking after the perfect ideal he could not find, and worse still, could not even conceive. *Queen Mab* is an example of the first, *Alastor*, of the second. The hopes for man with which *Queen Mab* was written grew cold; he himself fell ill and looked for death; the world seemed chilled to all the ideas he loved, and he turned from writing about mankind to describe in *Alastor* the life and wandering and death of a lonely poet. It was himself he described, but Shelley was too stern a moralist to allow that a life lived apart from human interests was a noble one, and the title of the poem expresses this. It is *Alastor*—"a spirit of evil, a spirit of solitude." How wrong he felt such a life is seen in his next poem, the *Revolt of Islam*, 1817. He wrote it with the hope that men were beginning to recover from the apathy and despair into which the failure of the revolutionary ideas had thrown them, and to show them what they should strive and hope for, and destroy. But it is still only a martyr's hope that the poet possesses. The two chief characters of the poem, Laon and Cythna, are both slain in their struggle against tyranny, but their sacrifice

is to bring forth hereafter the fruit of freedom. The poem itself has finer passages in it than *Alastor*, but as a whole it is inferior to it. It is quite formless. The same year Shelley went to Italy, and renewed health and the climate gave him renewed power. *Rosalind and Helen* appeared, and in the beginning of 1818 *Julian and Maddalo*. The first tale circles round a social subject that interested him, the second is a familiar conversation on the story of a madman in San Lazzaro at Venice. In it his poetry becomes more masculine, and he has for the first time won mastery over his art. The new life and joy he had now gained brought back his enthusiasm for mankind, and he broke out into the splendid lyric drama of *Prometheus Unbound*. Prometheus bound on his rock represents Humanity suffering under the reign of Evil impersonated in Jupiter. Asia, at the beginning of the drama separated from Prometheus, is the all-pervading Love which in loving makes the universe of nature. The time comes when Evil is overthrown. Prometheus is then delivered and united to Asia; that is, Man is wedded to the spirit in Nature, and Good is all in all. The fourth act is the choral song of the regenerated universe. It is the finest example we have of the working out in poetry of that idea of a glorious destiny for the whole of Man which Cowper introduced into English poetry. The marriage of Asia and Prometheus, of Nature and Humanity, the distinct existence of each for that purpose, is the same idea as Wordsworth's differently expressed; and Shelley and he are the only two poets who have touched it philosophically, Wordsworth with most contemplation, Shelley with most imagination. Shelley's poetry of Man reached its height in *Prometheus Unbound*, and he turned now to try his matured power upon other subjects. Two of these were neither personal nor for the sake of man. The first was the drama of the *Cenci*, the gravest and noblest tragedy since Webster wrote,

which we possess. It is as restrained in expression as the previous poem is exuberant; yet there is no poem of Shelley's in which passion and thought and imagery are so wrought together. The second was the *Adonais*, a lament for the death of John Keats. It is a poem written by one who seems a spirit about a spirit, belonging in expression, thought, and feeling to that world above the senses in which Shelley habitually lived. Of all this class of poems, to which many of his lyrics belong, *Epipsychidion* is the most impalpable, but, to those who care for Shelley's ethereal world, the finest poem he ever wrote. No critic can ever comprehend it; it is the artist's poem, and all Shelley's philosophy of life is contained in it. Of the same class is the *Witch of Atlas*, the poem in which he has personified divine Imagination in her work in poetry and all her attendants and all her doings among men.

As a lyric poet, Shelley, on his own ground, is easily great. Some of the lyrics are purely personal; some, as in the very finest, the *Ode to the West Wind*, mingle together personal feelings and prophetic hopes for Man. Some are lyrics of Nature; some are dedicated to the rebuke of tyranny and the cause of liberty; others belong to the passion of love, and others are written on the shadows of dim dreams of thought. They form together the most sensitive, the most imaginative, and the most musical, but the least tangible lyrical poetry we possess.

As the poet of Nature, he had the same idea as Wordsworth, that Nature was alive; but while Wordsworth made the active principle which filled and made Nature to be Thought, Shelley made it Love. As each distinct thing in Nature had to Wordsworth a thinking spirit in it, so each thing had to Shelley a loving spirit in it; even the invisible spheres of vapour sucked by the sun from the forest pool had each their indwelling spirit. We feel then that Shelley, as well as Words-

worth, and for a similar reason, could give a special love to, and therefore describe vividly, each thing he saw. He wants the closeness of grasp of nature which Wordsworth and Keats had, but he had the power in a far greater degree than they of describing a vast landscape melting into indefinite distance. In this he stands first among English poets, and is in poetry what Turner was in landscape painting. Along with this special quality of vastness his colour is as true as Scott's, but truer in this, that it is full of half tones, while Scott's is laid out in broad yellow, crimson, and blue, in black and white.

Towards the end of his life his poetry became overloaded with mystical metaphysics. What he might have been we cannot tell, for at the age of thirty he left us, drowned in the sea he loved, washed up and burned on the sandy spits near Pisa. His ashes lie beneath the walls of Rome, and *Cor cordium*, "Heart of hearts," written on his tomb, well says what all who love poetry feel when they think of him.

154. **John Keats** lies near him, cut off like him ere his genius ripened; not so great, but possessing perhaps greater possibilities of greatness; not so ideal, but for that very reason closer in his grasp of nature than Shelley. In one thing he was entirely different from Shelley—he had no care whatever for the great human questions which stirred Shelley; the present was entirely without interest to him. He marks the close of that poetic movement which the ideas of the Revolution in France had started in England, as Shelley marks the attempt to revive it. Keats, finding nothing to move him in an age which had now sunk into apathy on these points, went back to Greek and mediæval life to find his subjects, and established, in doing so, that which has been called the *literary poetry* of England. His first subject after some minor poems in 1817 was *Endymion*, 1818, his last *Hyperion*, 1820. These, along with *Lamia*, were

poems of Greek life. *Endymion* has all the faults and all the promise of a great poet's early work, and no one knew its faults better than Keats, whose preface is a model of just self-judgment. *Hyperion*, a fragment of a tale of the overthrow of the Titans, is itself like a Titanic torso, and in it the faults of *Endymion* are repaired and its promise fulfilled. Both are filled with that which was deepest in the mind of Keats, the love of loveliness for its own sake, the sense of its rightful and pre-eminent power; and in the singleness of worship which he gave to Beauty, Keats is especially the artist, and the true father of the latest modern school of poetry. Not content with carrying us into Greek life, he took us back into mediæval romance, and in this also he started a new type of poetry. There are two poems which mark this revival—*Isabella*, and the *Eve of St. Agnes*. *Isabella* is a version of Boccaccio's tale of the *Pot of Basil*; *St. Agnes' Eve* is, as far as I know, original; the former is purely mediæval, the latter is tinged with the conventional mediævalism of Spenser. Both poems are however modern and individual. The overwrought daintiness of style, the pure sensuousness, the subtle flavour of feeling, belong to no one but Keats. Their originality has caused much imitation of them, but they are too original for imitation. In smaller poems, such as the *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, the poem to *Autumn*, and some sonnets, he is perhaps at his very best. In these and in all, his painting of Nature is as close, as direct as Wordsworth's; less full of the imagination that links human thought to Nature, but more full of the imagination which broods upon enjoyment of beauty. His career was short; he had scarcely begun to write when death took him away from the loveliness he loved so keenly. Consumption drove him to Rome, and there he died almost alone. He lies close by Shelley, near the pyramid of Caius Cestius.

155. **Modern English Poetry.**—Keats marks

the exhaustion of the impulse which began with Burns and Cowper. There was no longer now in England any large wave of public thought or feeling such as could awaken poetry. We have then, arising after his death, a number of pretty little poems, having no inward fire, no idea, no marked character. They might be written by any versifier at any time, and express pleasant indifferent thought in pleasant verse. Such were Mrs. Hemans's poems, and those of L. E. L., and such were Tennyson's earliest poems, in 1830. But with the Reform agitation, and the new religious agitation at Oxford, which was of the same date, a new excitement or a new form of the old, came on England, and with it a new tribe of poets arose, among whom we live. The elements of their poetry were also new, though their germs were sown in the previous poetry. It took up the theological, sceptical, social, and political questions which disturbed England. It gave itself to metaphysics and to analysis of human character. It carried the love of natural scenery into almost every county in England, and described the whole land. Some of its best writers are Robert Browning and his wife, Matthew Arnold, and A. H. Clough. One of them, ALFRED TENNYSON, has for forty years remained the first. All the great subjects of his time he has touched poetically, and enlightened. His feeling for Nature is accurate, loving, and of a wide range. His human sympathy fills as wide a field. The large interests of mankind, and of his own time, the lives of simple people, and the subtler phases of thought and feeling which arise in our overwrought society are wisely and tenderly written of in his poems. His drawing of distinct human characters is the best we have in pure poetry since Chaucer wrote. He writes true songs, and he has excelled all English writers in the pure Idyll. The Idylls of the King are a kind of epic, and he has lately tried the drama. In lyrical measures as in the

form of his blank verse he is as inventive as original. It is by the breadth of his range that he most conclusively takes the first place among the modern poets.

Within the last ten years, the impulse given in '32 has died away. The vital interest in theological and social questions, in human questions of the present, has decayed; and the same thing which we find in the case of Keats has again taken place. A new class of literary poets have arisen, who have no care for a present they think dull, for religious questions to which they see no end. They too have gone back to Greek and mediæval and old Norse life for their subjects. They find much of their inspiration in Italy and in Chaucer; but they continue the love poetry and the poetry of natural description. Of them all WILLIAM MORRIS is the greatest, and of him much more is to be expected. At present he is our most delightful story-teller. He loses much by being too long, but we pardon the length for the gentle charm. The *Death of Jason* and the stories told month by month in the *Earthly Paradise*, a Greek and a mediæval story alternately, will long live to give pleasure to the holiday times of men. It is some pity that it is foreign and not English story, but we can bear to hear alien tales, for Tennyson has always kept us close to the scenery, the traditions, the daily life and the history of England; and his last poem, the drama of *Queen Mary*, 1875, is written almost exactly twelve hundred years since the date of our first poem, Cædmon's *Paraphrase*. To think of one and then of the other, and of the great and continuous stream of literature that has flowed between them, is more than enough to make us all proud of the name of Englishmen.

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