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.