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.

LONDON R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS.

PRIMERS.

ONE SHILLING EACH.

Science—*Edited by* PROFESSORS HUXLEY, ROSCOE, *and* STEWART.

INTRODUCTORY: PROFESSOR HUXLEY, F.R.S. [*Shortly.*
CHEMISTRY: PROFESSOR ROSCOE, F.R.S.
PHYSICS: PROFESSOR BALFOUR STEWART, F.R.S.
PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY: PROFESSOR A. GEIKIE, F.R.S.
GEOLOGY: PROFESSOR A. GEIKIE, F.R.S.
ASTRONOMY: J. NORMAN LOCKYER, F.R.S.
PHYSIOLOGY: DR. M. FOSTER, F.R.S.
BOTANY: DR. J. D. HOOKER, C.B., F.R.S.

History—*Edited by* JOHN RICHARD GREEN, M.A.

EUROPE: E. A. FREEMAN, D.C.L., LL.D. [*Shortly.*
ENGLAND: JOHN RICHARD GREEN, M.A. [*Shortly.*
GREECE: C. A. FYFFE, M.A.
ROME: M. CREIGHTON, M.A.
FRANCE: CHARLOTTE M. YONGE. [*Shortly.*
GEOGRAPHY: GEORGE GROVE, D.C.L.

Literature—*Edited by* JOHN RICHARD [illegible]

ENGLISH GRAMMAR: REV. R. M[illegible]
ENGLISH LITERATURE: REV. ST[illegible]

LATIN LITERATURE: REV. DR. FA[illegible]
GREEK LITERATURE: PROFESSOR R. C[illegible]

SHAKSPERE: PROFESSOR DOWDEN.
PHILOLOGY: J. PEILE, M.A.
BIBLE PRIMER: GEORGE GROVE, D.C.L.
CHAUCER: F. J. FURNIVALL, M.A.
GREEK ANTIQUITIES: REV. J. P. MAHAFFY, M.A. [*Shortly.*

MACMILLAN AND CO.